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THE LITERARY WORKS OF COUNT DE GOBINEAU

BY

ARNOLD H. ROWBOTHAM PH. D.

PARIS
LIBRAIRIE ANCIENNE HONORÉ CHAMPION
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TO MY MOTHER

PREFACE

The fortunes of Gobineau's writings furnish an interesting piece of literary history. Almost completely ignored during his lifetime, he was "discovered" in his last years by Richard Wagner, who introduced him to Nietzsche and others, particularly to Professor Ludwig Schemann. The latter proceeded to make him the object of an intense hero-worship. From the devotion of this ardent disciple have come two bulky volumes of biography, as well as two volumes of *Quellen,* and several other works, including editions of Gobineau's writings hitherto unpublished. Under his inspiration a Gobineau society was formed in Germany and Gobinism became one of the cults of the end of the nineteenth century.

While this movement was developing political tendencies and was being made the tool of German imperialism, the name of Gobineau continued to be unknown in France. Finally, in the first years of the twentieth century, his talents as a thinker and writer were brought to the attention of the French reading public by André Hallays, A. Sorel, G. Deschamps, Robert Dreyfus, Ernest Seillière and others. Since then (with the exception of the war period) scarcely a year has gone by which has not seen the republication of at least one of his works. *La Renaissance* appeared in 1910, *Adélaïde* and the *Nouvelles Asiatiques* in 1913, *Fleur d'or* in 1917 (in Germany), *Ternove* in 1919, *M^lle^ Irnois* in 1920, *Les Pléiades* in 1921, *Scaramouche, Trois ans en Asie, Souvenirs de Voyage* in 1922, *Les Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* in 1923, *l'Abbaye de Typhaines* and *Le Prisonnier Chanceux* in 1924, *Nicolas Belavoir* in 1927 and *Ce qui se passe en Asie, l'Instinct révolutionnaire en France* in 1928. Some of these have passed through several editions. A number of them have been translated into English or German.

It was the ethnologist and historian in Gobineau that chiefly interested the Germans (in Schemann's work his literary talents have been treated for the greater part with undiscriminating praise). In France, however, Gobineau has been hailed as a literary artist of considerable genius, as a great "isolé", like Mérimée or Stendhal, born, like the latter, out of his time; and he is receiving the serious attention of writers and critics.

The ethnological theories of Gobineau have already been adequately dealt with by Schemann, Seillière and others, and we shall touch upon them only as they impinge upon our phase of the subject. It is the purpose of this work to examine the writings of Count de Gobineau and to determine wherein lies his claim to literary distinction.

The author wishes to acknowledge his constant debt to Professor Schemann, whose careful and exhaustive studies leave very little to be gleaned by other writers, and to the writings of MM. Lange, Dreyfus and Seillière, which have furnished many valuable suggestions. This work was undertaken at the suggetion of Professor Régis Michaud and to him, as well as to Professor Franck L. Schoell, who rendered invaluable service in the preparation of the manuscript, the author wishes to express his sincere appreciation.

Berkeley, California, 1928.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. *Life of Gobineau.* (1)

Joseph-Arthur, Comte de Gobineau, was born at Ville d'Avray on July 14, 1816, of a family belonging to the lesser nobility. His grandfather, Thibault Joseph, had been a lawyer and a councillor of the Parliament of Bordeaux. He had married an heiress, M[lle] Victoire de la Haye, and two children had been born of the marriage: the elder, named Thibault like his father, and the younger Louis, the father of the subject of our study. Thibault, who had joined the army of the Republic in Spain after the Revolution and, under the Empire, had been a friend of Talleyrand, was an ardent legitimist. Louis de Gobineau had been imprisoned at Vincennes for having refused to serve under the Empire. During the Hundred Days he had

(1) The chief sources for the life of Gobineau are as follows :
a) The preface to *Amadis* (Paris, 1887), written by Countess de la Tour ;
b) The biography accompanying the second edition of the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines,* written by Count de Basterot (Paris, 1884) ;
c) A manuscript in the Gobineau library at Strasbourg (MS 3537) entitled *Enfance et première jeunesse d'Arthur Joseph de Gobineau,* written by Gobineau's sister Caroline.

These sources, as well as the voluminous correspondence and documents of Gobineau at Strasbourg, have been made use of by Ludwig Schemann in his monumental work: *Gobineau, Eine Biographie* (Strasbourg, 1913, 2 vols.) Maurice Lange, in his *Le Comte de Gobineau, Etude biographiques et critique* (Strasbourg, 1924), has made use of all these sources in a work in which he has attempted to trace the development of the thought of Gobineau. The other two chief works on the subject are E. Seillière : *Le Comte de Gobineau et l'Aryanisme Historique* (Paris, 1903), and Robert Dreyfus : *La Vie et les Prophéties du Comte de Gobineau* (published in the "Cahiers de la Quinzaine," Paris, 1905.)

held the post of *officier d'ordonnance* on the staff of Count d'Artois and later had become a captain in the royal guard. He had married Anne-Louise Magdeleine de Gercy, and three children had been born of the marriage : Alix, who died young, Caroline Hippolyte, who became a Benedictine nun, and Joseph Arthur. (2)

Born in an atmosphere intensely royalist and catholic, young Gobineau absorbed from his earliest moments those aristocratic ideas and predilections which were to form the basis of the greater part of his writings. The book that he wrote in the last days of his life, the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl et de sa descendance,* which was the supposed history of his family, owes its inception, or at any rate a great part of its spirit, to the associations of these early days.

One of his first teachers was a young student of Heidelberg and, in studying with him the German langage and literature, young Gobineau laid the foundations of that love of Germany which stayed with him throughout his life and which has been the cause of much misunderstanding regarding him and his ideas. In 1830 Madame de Gobineau took her children to live in Switzerland and later installed herself in an old castle at Inzlingen in Baden. It was the time when the thoughts of the young men of France were turned to the misty landscapes of Ossian and to the colour and charm revealed in the exotic pages of Chateaubriand and his school. Gobineau must have found an excellent setting for these moods in this medieval castle. In later years, when he wrote the *Abbaye de Typhaines,* he probably drew largely on his recollections of this short stay in Inzlingen for much of his material.

A short time afterwards he was sent to the college of the nearby town of Bienne, where he studied German and Latin. Gobineau was not a great admirer of Roman civilization and it may have been the influence of an unsympathetic tutor at this time which divorced his affections from the land of Caesar. If the Greek and Roman classics did not interest him, however, he found a fascination in the study of feudal Germany and in the mysticism of the Orient, for his studies already included excursions into the literatures of the East. (3)

The Revolution of 1830 and the abdication of Charles X was a

(2) It is supposed that Gobineau's mother was the daughter of a natural son of Louis XV. (See Schemann, *Biog.* 1,20.) The married life of the author's mother and father seems to have been an unhappy one. It ended in a formal separation about 1835. (Lange, p. 8.)

(3) Lange, p. 17.

bitter blow to the royalist family. Gobineau's father retired to Normandy and later established himself at Redon, in Brittany, where Arthur joined him. The life of the small Breton town was too quiet for the energetic young man, however, and in a very short time we find him starting for Paris to seek his fortune. At the capital he found his uncle Thibault, who received him coldly. This incorrigible old legitimist seems never to have had any great affection for his nephew and, apparently, did not help him very much in the arduous task of making a name for himself.

The only career open to a young gentleman belonging to a family of such pronounced legitimist sentiments was the army, but Joseph Arthur Gobineau was barred from the military profession by his aversion to mathematics, aided, probably, by his dislike for barracks life. He turned his thoughts, therefore, to study and particularly to the study of Oriental languages. (4) One of his companions of those early days noted in him three dominant characteristics : an extraordinary pride, an absolute independence of mind and an ardent liking for oriental form and colour. Each of these traits can be traced clearly through his subsequent writings. With the exception of a broadening of the intelligence resulting from profound study and a certain sense of disillusion developed during a long and varied experience, the Gobineau of later days, of the *Nouvelles Asiatiques,* of the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl* and of the *Renaissance,* can be found in this young student of Paris. He was, says Amélie Laigneau, the great friend of his early days :

> ... déjà un Amadis aux idées chevaleresques et une âme héroïque rêvant aux plus grandes et aux plus nobles choses. C'était un grand jeune homme à la fois grave et naïf; il se disait musulman, prêt à faire le voyage de la Mecque. Il nous racontait des histoires merveilleuses et nous forçait de nous asseoir à la façon orientale. (5)

He threw himself with ardour into the task of making a reputation for himself. At first it was a question of earning his daily bread. He obtained a position in a gas company but soon found the post

(4) Schemann, *Biog.,* 1.40, quoted by E. Schuré: "Le Germanisme de Gobineau," *Revue Bleue,* vol. LIII, p. 554-560.

(5) His sister Caroline writes of these early studies :

« Parmi ses professeurs il s'en trouvait plusieurs versés dans les langues orientales, qui, voyant en Arthur des dispositions spéciales pour les langues, furent enchantés de trouver un élève si intelligent. Il se jeta avec son ardeur habituelle dans toutes les difficultés des études sanscrites, arabes, zendes, et les obscurités de toutes les grammaires comparées ne l'effrayaient pas. » (*Enfance et première jeunesse,* quoted by Lange, p. 17.)

badly paid and ill-suited to his aristocratic disposition. His letters of this period are full of courage, of hope and of a determination to succeed in spite of obstacles. After several attempts to break into the business world he came to the conclusion that, if he was to make his living, it must be by his pen, and very soon we find him fairly launched in the busy but somewhat unremunerative profession of hack writer.

During this period he worked hard, spending from ten to fifteen hours a day in writing and study. The first of his writings to appear in a reputable journal was a study on Greece entitled "Capodistra," which was published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* on April 15, 1841 (6). From 1838 to 1849 he worked steadily and a number of his articles on political subjects and on matters of literary criticism appeared in *La Quotidienne, l'Unité, La Revue de Paris, La Revue Nouvelle* and other journals (7). In the meantime he was mingling in Parisian society, and was making a number of friends among people who were attracted by the serious conversation and fertile mind of the young writer. Chief among these were the de Serre family, the de Tocquevilles and de Rémusat. He also became the friend of the painters Ary and Henri Scheffer. It was in the studio of the former that those artistic talents were doubtless awakened which found expression in late years in his interest in sculpture (8). The greatest friendship of this period, however, was that with Amélie de Laigneau, the daughter of an officer comrade of his father. During his early days, says Schemann, Amélie de Laigneau was the guiding star of his life (9).

For financial reasons probably, this early romance did not end in

(6) See below, Chap. III. Schemann (*Biog.* I, 197-204) gives a list of his articles on political subjects. Among them was an article on Germany in which Gobineau, continuing the tradition of M^me^ de Staël, defended that country against the attacks on Teutomania made by Quinet, particularly in the latter's article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of Dec. 1842 entitled "La Teutomanie." Further contributions to the *Revue des Deux Mondes* were prevented by a difference of opinion with the editor Buloz. Schemann (*Biog.*, I, 190) quotes a letter of Gobineau, dated Dec. 31, 1844, in which Gobineau says that Buloz had offered to publish an article of his, giving him full freedom of expression, an offer which Gobineau, whose sensibilities had evidently been wounded, refused.

(7) These articles in *l'Unité* are the first formal expression of Gobineau's sympathy for German civilization and culture. (*Lange*, pp. 70-71). An article in *l'Unité* (March 13, 1843) on "l'Alviane" shows Gobineau's interest in the condottieri.

(8) At the de Serres' he met the mystic social reformer Ballanche. In his correspondence he mentions also having met the well-known actress M^me^ Dorval of the Comédie Française. (MS. 3518, letter of Dec. 30, 1837.)

(9) Schemann, *Biog.*, I, 39.

marriage, but, as Baroness de St. Martin, Amélie retained a life-long interest in the friend of her youth. That he did not neglect the company of the young men of his time is shown by the fact that we find him a member of a society of young literary enthusiasts who termed themselves "Les Cousins d'Isis." Maxime Du Camp, in his *Souvenirs Littéraires,* has given us a brief account of this circle, gathered "from all corners of the social horizon." (10) It consisted of only eight members, but among them were several who were destined, like Gobineau, to take up the profession of diplomacy. Among this group of "select" (they called themselves "les scelti") Gobineau, whose brotherhood name was Zuccarelli, "floated gaily down the stream of life," (11) discussing problems of literature and art. It was under the auspices of this group that Gobineau published, in 1844, a play of three acts in alexandrines, entitled *Les Adieux de Don Juan.* During these early days the young author seems to have had a very modest opinion of his literary talents. Careful in composition and conscientious in the treatment of his subject, he was nevertheless quite free from conceit or from an exaggerated idea of the worth of his writings. He mistrusted his ability as a poet and decried any publicity for his *Don Juan.* We find him writing to his father (Jan. 16, 1844):

> J'ai l'horreur de ce tripotage des journaux autour d'une œuvre d'art qui, à mon sens, ne saurait être jamais trop pudique ou trop orgueilleuse, comme tu voudras (12).

During one of the intervals in this busy life of writing and study we find him visiting his parents at the Breton manor of Redon. He arrived with a sheaf of unfinished manuscript under his arm, written in Arabic, Persian and Hindu, and he would wander about the house, says his sister Caroline, scribbling inscriptions in Arabic characters on the doors or reciting poetry with the enthusiasm of a neophyte. At other times he would sit with his father and discuss with the old royalist historical and literary matters (13).

It was this visit and the inspiration, probably, of these conversations with his father which gave him the idea for his first novel : *Ternove,* a story of the Hundred Days. It was finished in 1847, was purchased by Bertin, the director of the *Journal des Débats,* for two

(10) *Souvenirs Littéraires,* I, 193.

(11) Letter of Du Camp to Gobineau, August 17, 1841, cited by Léon Deffoux: *Le Comte de Gobineau, "Don Juan" et les "Cousins d'Isis"* (Mercure *de France,* 1924.) Sec also Schemann, *Biog.* I,91.

(12) Quoted by Deffoux, op. cit. p. 14.

(13) *Enfance et première jeunesse* (MS. 3537).

thousand francs, and it appeared as a *roman feuilleton* from October 22 to December 23 of the same year. Despite his repeated minimizing of his literary talent, Gobineau seems to have been greatly pleased at the medium through which this novel was given to the public, and in a letter of this date he expresses satisfaction that the publication of *Ternove* in the *Débats* has placed him above "the mere scribblers with whom he had been classed by certain ill-intentioned people." (14) Throughout his life Gobineau combined with a pardonable anxiety for his reputation as a writer a sensitiveness to criticism which appears curious when we remember his neglect of the literary fortunes of his works. *Ternove* seems to have been well received, for Tancrède de Visan, who is sponsor for the latest printing (Paris, 1922), mentions two editions, one of Paris and the other of Brussels, published in the following year.

In 1846 the young author had married M^lle^ Gabrielle Clémence de Monnerot, a young lady of creole origin. Of this marriage there were two daughters: Diane (afterwards Countess de Guldercrone), born 1848, and Christine (later Madame Maxime Serpeille), born 1857. Among other things that Gobineau became interested in at this time was the question of decentralization of power. He undertook to publish a review, advocating the policies of regionalism. Throughout his life the author of the Essay seems to have been unwilling to concede to Paris that predominating position over the life of France which the capital has always taken. He believed that the most vital part of the social and political life of the country lay in the provinces. The *Revue Provinciale,* the publication of which he began with Louis de Kergorlay in 1848, advocated decentralization, and supported the interests of the clergy and the freedom of education. Owing to lack of financial support, however, the journal lived through only twelve numbers, but it is noteworthy as being one of the first periodicals in France to preach the doctrines of regionalism (15).

During the two following years Gobineau continued to contribute to the journals. Among his literary works of this period were: *Mademoiselle Irnois,* a novelette, which appeared in the *National;* an historical novel, *l'Abbaye de Typhaines;* two *romans feuilletons: le Prisonnier Chanceux* and *Les Aventures de Nicolas Belavoir,* and a play entitled *Alexandre le Macédonien.* He also wrote a number of articles

(14) Tancrède de Visan, Introduction to 1922 ed. of *Ternove,* p. VII.

(15) T. de Visan: "Un ancêtre du régionalisme", *Revue Bleue,* XLIX, 271.

of literary criticism for the *Quotidienne* and the *Revue Nouvelle* (16). During this period of his life the young author was constantly under the stress of financial embarrassment, and he was using his pen to add to his slender resources enough to provide a livelihood. He looked upon politics and poetry as subjects most fitted to the pen of a gentleman (17), but he entered with zest into the task of writing serial stories when the popularity of this type of literature made it most lucrative. The number of works from his pen during these years furnishes eloquent testimony to the young writer's energy and industry. He considered literary work, however, merely as an avocation. He was more interested in politics and he gradually began to think of diplomacy as a career.

A chance came to him to enter this field of activity when, on the second of June 1849, his friend Alexis de Tocqueville was given the portfolio of Foreign Affairs under Louis Napoleon, and the author of *Democracy in America* made Gobineau the head of his cabinet (18). The ministry lasted only until November of the same year, but it gave Gobineau the chance to make friendships and to gain a footing on the ladder of the French diplomatic service, so that when the ministry was dissolved, he was able, through the good offices of an old comrade of his father, General de la Hitte, to obtain the post of first secretary at the embassy of Berne.

With the year 1849 begins the second period of Gobineau's life. From this date to almost the day of his death he represented his country, in a major or minor capacity, in different parts of the world; in Switzerland, in Frankfort, in Brazil, in Greece, in Persia, in Newfoundland and in Sweden. Wherever he went he took to his new environment the gifts of an active intelligence, an unusual curiosity and a power of keen observation. All that he saw and heard and the

(16) See below, Chap. III.

(17) Letter to his father, Dec. 31, 1840.

(18) Lange discusses the question of Gobineau's sincerity in accepting office under a government which showed itself so contrary to his ideals and suggests that Gobineau considered it merely a pis-aller, and looked forward to an empire, even under a Napoleon, which would be an improvement over the reign of the "blouses sales."

Gobineau seems always to have taken an attitude of aristocratic disdain towards his profession. "Je suis un barbare à la solde de l'Empire," he writes to M^me^ Franck (Aug. I, 1867). Throughout his life he showed an impatience with the incompetence which marked the work of many diplomats and politicians. In *Ottar Jarl* he characterizes politicians as "animaux d'une voracité implacable et dont l'aptitude à ne se laisser détourner de leurs convoitises par aucune considération constitue le premier mérite." (*Histoire d'Ottar Jarl.*, p. 103.)

impressions that he received fixed themselves in his brilliantly analytical mind. A great part of these impressions were put down on paper and his subsequent literary work was to a very great extent the result of his experiences and observations as a diplomat.

From his letters to De Tocqueville (19) we get an illuminating impression of Gobineau's life at Berne. It is obvious that he was unhappy there. The climate disagreed with him. He was afraid that his wife and child would contract goitre, which was common at that time among the inhabitants. He was, above all, unfortunate in his relations with his official colleagues. The minister, M. Reinhard, was a man advanced in years and, according to Gobineau, retained in service only on account of his age. The young secretary, filled with a naïve enthusiasm for certain ideas, seems to have gone beyond the limits of discretion in making suggestions or in some matters of routine connected with his work. His ardour was coldly received by the minister, whom Gobineau accuses of incompetence. Reinhard asked for his removal and the second secretary of the embassy, M. Aymé, threatened a duel. The upshot of the affair was that the young secretary Gobineau was snubbed, and in June 1851 we find him writing:

> Je ne suis rien à la légation. Je ne fais absolument rien; on ne me montre que ce qu'il est impossible de me cacher; on ne me consulte jamais, bref je suis tenu en dehors de tout. (20)

This ostracism, while it may have been extremely disagreeable to one of his active temperament, gave him more leisure to study the country and particularly the political situation, and we find him writing long letters to his former chief about public affairs in Switzerland, where a violent political struggle was taking place. The disagreeable circumstances of his life at the embassy undoubtedly coloured his views regarding the country and the people, for he writes little in praise of them. He comments favourably on their good sense and on their wisdom in matters of government, but he deplores their lack of intellectual achievement and the mediocrity of their intelligence. In the light of the *Essai* it is not surprising to note that he traces this general mediocrity to their democratic form of government.

But Gobineau was spending his time at Berne on a more impor-

(19) *Correspondance entre Alexis de Tocqueville et Arthur de Gobineau* (1843-1859), L. Schemann, Paris, 1909.

(20) *Ibid*, p. 158.

tant task than mere observation of the people and their customs. In 1853 he published the first two volumes of his *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines,* (21) and the third and fourth volumes appeared two years later. The Essay is by far the most remarkable of Gobineau's works. It represents the intense thought of the brilliant young thinker, over a period of a number of years. It contains practically all his social and political philosophy and we shall see that he retained these theories—almost in their entirety—up to the time of his death. The ideas he developed in the Essay have, for the greater part, been rejected by sociologists since his time, but the work, in spite of certain daring hypotheses and of the paradoxical nature of many of its arguments, is full of striking ideas. Whatever its shortcomings, it must be recognized as the stimulating and erudite product of a well-informed and fertile intelligence. (22)

(21) *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines,* par le Comte de Gobineau, 4th ed. (preceded by a biography by Count de Basterot).

(22) Although a discussion of the ethnological theories of Gobineau is outside the range of this study, it seems advisable to sum up in a few lines the ideas which he put forward in his book. Briefly, they are as follows:

The object of the work is "to fix and determine the principle of death in all societies and to trace its effects in the lives of those nations of whom history has left us records" (Eng. ed., p. 108). The cause of the decadence of a people is due neither to immorality nor to luxury nor to weakness of government. The sole cause is the decadence of the blood of the people. This leads to the main hypothesis of the Essay that nations are fundamentally different, that their capacity for production and culture is different. Which, then, is the superior race? The author classes the people of the earth into three divisions: black, yellow and white. Each has its dominant traits: the negro, blind appetites, predominance of the senses, instability of desires; the yellow race, tendency towards mediocrity, love of the practical, respect for custom; the white race, honour as the fundamental motive for conduct. Having proved the superiority of the white race, the author goes on to discuss its history. Springing from the great plateau of Central Asia this white or Aryan race was "la plus splendide espèce d'homme dont la vue ait pu réjouir les astres et la terre" (*Essai* I, 374). Originally, Gobineau says, —accepting the Biblical division—there were three distinct peoples: the sons of Ham, of Schem and of Japheth. The sons of Ham early disappeared, absorbed in the black nations of Africa. The sons of Shem, originally white, became gradually decadent through intermixture of blood. The sons of Japheth were the chosen people. A branch of the Japhethites settled in the peninsular of Iran (and, in his *Histoire des Perses,* written several years later, Gobineau traced the rise and decay of these Iranian Aryans); another branch settled in southeastern Europe and are known to history as the Greeks and Romans. These two nations soon intermarried with the decadent Semites of the Mediterranean basin and this corruption, completed through the Asian exploits of Alexander, brought death to Greece and Rome. A third Aryan branch is to be found in the Germanic peoples. With this branch decadence through race mixture is least apparent and the Germanic peoples today have best kept the original Aryan strain. (Here lies the basis of the so-called Nordic theory and, incidentally, of the popularity of Gobineau with the German imperialists). The author of the Essay seems to have found the purest Germanic blood now in Germany, now in England, and in the last years of his life,

The reception of the work in France was poor. Whether the reason for this, as De Tocqueville writes the author, (23) lies in the fact that the France of that time was suffering from a mental lassitude regarding national and sociological questions is doubtful. At this period the question of race does seem to have aroused some interest in France. In the year following the appearance of the first two volumes of the Essay, Paul de Rémusat wrote a long article for the *Revue des deux Mondes* (24) on the same subject but limited his discussion of Gobineau to a mere mention of his name. It is probable that most writers were loath to approach a book written by a more or less obscure author, one the chief arguments of which rested on an implied decadence of his own nation. National sensitiveness, apparently, was not the least of the reasons which caused the French public to receive the Essay with a certain amount of irritation. Prosper Mérimée warned his friend that the book was not well received in Paris. "Mérimée m'écrit que l'on voudrait me manger et qu'on parle de me brûler," writes Gobineau to Tocqueville (25). The author was greatly disappointed at the reception of his work. He desired that the ideas contained in it might be seriously discussed by his countrymen and he regretted that no one could be found to write a critique of the book for one of the important reviews. His friend Count Prokesch-Osten offered to write for the Academy of Vienna a critical commentary of the work and Gobineau wished that the same thing might be done in France. Mignet, when offered the task, declined with the laconic remark:

« Si ce que vous dites est vrai, j'aime mieux que ce soit un autre que moi qui l'affirme. »

De Tocqueville also refused, on the ground that his attitude to the Essay, was, on the whole, unsympathetic. The author of *Democracy in America* did not hesitate, though in a friendly spirit, to condemn the main thesis of the book. In a series of striking letters,

more definitely in the Scandinavian countries. However, this purity is not absolute. The deadly germ of race mixture pursues all peoples and the Germanic Aryans will finally succumb. The conclusion of the doctrine, then, is universal decadence and ruin through blood-mixture.

For convenience the *Essai* will, in these pages, be referred to as "the Essay."

(23) Op. cit., p. 198.

(24) *Revue des Deux Mondes*, March 15, 1854 (critique of *De l'Homme et des Races Humaines*, H. Holland, Paris, 1852, and of *Cours de Physiologie*, Barard, 1850-3).

(25) Op. cit., p. 277.

marked otherwise by a warm friendship which transcended their difference in point of view, the older man denounced the pessimism which was at the basis of the Gobinist theory of race. "Permit me", he writes, "to have less confidence in you than in the goodness and justice of God." (26) The man who saw in democracy the supreme fact of modern social progress and believed in liberty as the great energizing force of national life could not be expected to sympathize with a system which despised democracy, ignored political liberty and showed a profound contempt for the human race. De Tocqueville generously praised the brilliance and intellectual power that were evident in the Essay but he strenuously opposed the main argument of the work, the inevitable decadence of the race. (27)

But if the Essay was ignored, or unfavourably received in France, it found a warmer reception elsewhere. In Germany it was immediately recognized as a valuable contribution to sociological and ethnological thought and from that day to the present time its reputation has remained unshaken in the land of its adoption. The friends whom it gained for the author in Germany showed their appreciation of the importance of the work several years later by the formation of the Gobineau-Vereinigung (28). In America the work was translated in part, and published, by Nutt and Hotz, two anti-abolitionist leaders (29), who found in Gobineau's theories of the inferiority of the black race support for their own ideas. They were careful, however, to translate only the first part, so as to avoid spoiling the effect of their work by presenting the part dealing with the decadence and ultimate ruin of the white race. (30)

(26) *Corr.*, op. cit., p. 313.

(27) Renan (letter of April 19, 1854), writing about the Essay, admits the "verve d'esprit, les qualités historiques, les connaissances variées qu'il suppose," but he adds: "J'aurai bien à faire quelques réserves non sur la thèse fondamentale mais sur quelques applications." He excuses himself from writing a review of the book for the *Revue des Deux Mondes* on the ground that he is too busy. After reading Books III and IV, he writes (June 26, 1856), "Vous avez fait là un livre des plus remarquables, plein de vigueur et d'originalité d'esprit, seulement bien peu fait pour être compris en France, plutôt fait pour y être mal compris. L'esprit français se prête peu aux considérations ethnographiques" (MS. 3526).

(28) See below.

(29) See letter to Prokesch-Osten, Feb. 2, 1855 (MS. 3524).

(30) Henry Hotz, the translator of the American version, writes (July 11, 1869):

"Briefly your book has not met with a very brilliant reception on this side of the Atlantic. It has not produced the sensation I had really expected for it, but it has made a success more to be desired than mere ephemeral newspaper notoriety. It has been highly approved of by the most intelligent... it is steadily though slowly progressing."

What effect did the publication of the Essay have upon the reputation and career of Gobineau? The book was read, apparently, by only a few in France, and these few, as we have seen, were at most only lukewarm in their praise of it. The relation between Gobineau's work as an author and his duties as a diplomat were of such a nature as to hinder rather than assist his advancement in his chosen profession, and there was probably more than a grain of truth in the remark made to him by M. Drouyn de Lhuys on the occasion of the appearance of the first two volumes. The Minister of Foreign Affairs wrote to the young author: "Un livre scientifique de cette portée ne vous sera pas utile pour votre carrière. Il peut, au contraire, vous faire beaucoup d'ennemis." (31) The far-sighted minister had wisely put his finger on what proved to be the weakness of Gobineau's position. The author of the Essay, as André Hallays has pointed out, (32) was destined to be looked upon as a savant by the diplomats and as a diplomat by the savants, and, consequently, as an amateur by both. When we examine the cause of his lack of popularity in his own country we shall realize that, to a large extent, it was because he was not taken seriously.

In the meantime, however, Gobineau was advancing in his diplomatic career. In 1856 he was sent to Frankfort with the duty of following the debates in the Diet and we find Tocqueville advising the ardent young diplomat to indulge in "a great deal of literary activity and of diplomatic somnolence." (33) He found Frankfort much more to his liking and he soon established himself on good terms with his chief, M. de Tallenay. Most of his spare time was devoted to the completion of the last two volumes of the Essay. He corresponded with De Tocqueville, Merimée, Guizot and others in France and gathered an enormous amount of material to be used in support of the theories he had developed in the first two volumes of his work. At this time he was contemplating, in addition, a work on natural history. (34) It is possible that the fact that this book was not written is due to the poor reception given to the Essay in France and to the author's discouragement at its lack of success.

Among the friendships which Gobineau formed at this time

(31) André Hallays: "Le Vicomte de Gobineau," *Journal des Débats*, October 6, 1899.

(32) *Ibid.*

(33) Op. cit., p. 207.

(34) Tocqueville, *Corr.*, p. 222.

was that with the Austrian diplomat Count Anton von Prokesch-Osten, who for many years served as representative of his country at Constantinople and elsewhere. This disciple of the pessimistic philosophy of Schopenhauer shared many of the views of Gobineau and had a great admiration for the Frenchman's talents as a thinker and writer. The correspondence between the two men covers a wide range of subjects and includes many pages concerning matters of international politics and philosophy of the highest interest. (35)

His uncle, Thibault Joseph, died in 1855 and left Gobineau enough to make him financially independent. Since his earliest days in Paris the young author had been in a difficult position. His pen had furnished him with only meager means of subsistence and his entrance into diplomacy had come at an extremely opportune time to furnish him a regular, though small, stipend. His uncle's legacy made matters much easier for him. In 1857 he was enabled to buy the old chateau of Trye in Normandy, in the country of his ancestors. (36) He seems, however, to have belonged to that class of nobles whose very aristocrat dispositions prevented them from being able to control their finances intelligently, and in the later years of his life he was again in straitened circumstances. (37)

When he received the news of his uncle's death he was in Persia. The French government had decided to send a mission to renew relations with the government at Teheran, and Gobineau, on account of his knowledge of Sanskrit, was chosen to accompany the chief of the mission, M. P. Bourée, as first secretary. Although Gobineau seems to have had misgivings at first as to whether he was acting wisely in accepting the post (he stipulated and was granted permission to retain his post at Frankfort), he was actually setting out on what was to prove one of the happiest adventures of his life. In February, 1855, he left Paris, taking with him his wife and little daughter Diana, then aged nine. The journey, a hazardous one at that time, was accomplished without a mishap. On the way the party stopped in Egypt, and, in his letters from that place, Gobineau speaks of the antipathy of the natives towards the Westerner and

(35) See Schemann: *Biog.* I, 388 sqq. for an account of Prokesch-Osten.

(36) See below chapter on "Gobineau, Aristocrat."

(37) Schemann (*Biog.*) mentions the following as friends and acquaintances of Gobineau during this period: Prosper Mérimée, Renan, Charles de Rémusat, Princess Mathilde, the orientalists J. Mohl and Botta, Father Huc (author of a well-known work on China), Barbier de Meynard and Sabatier.

of the latter's misrule. The mind of the traveller, absorbed with the problem of the Race, turned with never-failing delight to the opportunities presented to study new peoples and new customs, and as a result of this voyage we have the *Trois Ans en Asie,* one of the most enlightening and intelligent travel books of the nineteenth century.

Except for a hurried trip into Asia Minor, to accompany his wife and daughter when they were forced to return home, Gobineau spent three years in Persia during his first term there, eighteen months of which were spent as *chargé d'affaires* of the legation. Nowhere during his long and varied career did he find his surroundings more congenial. The East, of which he had dreamed since the early days when his favourite book had been the *Thousand and One Nights,* was now a reality to him. Few Occidentals have approached the Orient better endowed with those gifts of sympathy and appreciation which are necessary for success in an Eastern country. With the enormous advantage of being able to speak the language, he was able to come into more intimate touch with the people than is generally possible for diplomats in a foreign land. He visited the bazaars, chatted with the natives, fought wordy battles over the curios and old manuscripts which he accumulated in large quantities, absorbing all the time the point of view of the people and the background of tradition with which the country was richly endowed. From this study, in addition to the work mentioned above, came two of his most erudite works: *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* (published in 1865) and the *Histoire des Perses.* His memories of this time remained with him so vividly that, fifteen years later, he turned back to the experiences of his Persian days and wrote what is considered by some to be his best work, a volume of short stories entitled *Nouvelles Asiatiques.* (38)

He returned to France in 1858, and published his book of travels and two works on the reading of cuneiform texts. (39) In these

(38) In one of his letters to his sister, quoted by Schemann (*Biog.* I, 464), he describes the routine of his life at Teheran and, with an almost naïve satisfaction in his role of lord and master, adds: "Je punis et je récompense, je donne mes instructions, je fais mes comptes, je dispose du Kavedji et du palefrenier (mehter) qui ne sont pas d'un rang à se présenter devant moi sans être appelés." In a letter written to his sister during his second term in Persia he ends a long account of his establishment at Teheran with the words: "Ne suis-je pas un potentat bien heureux?" (Schemann, *Biog.* I, 506).

(39) *Traité des Ecritures Cunéiformes* (2 vols., Paris, 1864), and *Lectures des Textes Cunéiformes* (Paris, 1858).

works on the cuneiform characters Gobineau, using the methods of the poet rather than those of the scholar, invaded a field sacred to the professional archeologists, and he was snubbed for his pains by the savants, who saw in his work only a *tour de force* of the imagination, based on insufficient proofs. In his interpretation of the texts he has taken a point of view entirely different from that generally held and has attempted to read into the characters a meaning which had its basis in the use of magic. A letter to his friend Keller about this time expresses the wish that his theories might be more carefully examined by European scholars. (40) Gobineau complained that he had not been fairly treated and, indeed, he had been discussed with scant courtesy by men who were undoubtedly authorities on the subject. (41)

His next post was that of member of a commission sent to Newfoundland to discuss with the English the question of fisheries in that part of the world. He found his six months' stay among the ice and mists of the northern seas rather depressing for a lover of Asia, but he was able to gather from the experience material for another volume of travel entitled *Voyage à Terre-Neuve,* which was published in 1861. (42) Two years previously the government, evidently embarrassed at something this too ardent official had said or done, had wished to put him away safely and planned to send him as First Secretary of the Legation at Peking. Gobineau protested, for he looked upon this scheme as "not a disgrace but a punishment," (43) and the plan was abandoned. Whether it would have been against Gobineau's best interests to go to Peking or not, it is a matter of regret that he did not have the opportunity of coming into vital contact with the greatest civilisation of the Far East and so further enrich his knowledge of the Orient. (44) At this period there seems to have been considerable distrust of the author of the Essay on the part of the government. His superiors probably doubted his loyalty to the government and were not disposed to grant him favours. He wrote Tocqueville in March of that year that the

(40) *Briefwechsel Gobineaus mit Adelbert von Keller, herausgegeben von Ludwig Schemann,* Strasbourg, 1891, p. 14.

(41) See below, chap. IV, for a discussion of the subject.

(42) One of the stories of his volume *Souvenirs de Voyage* ("La chasse au caribou") is based upon his experiences during this visit.

(43) Tocqueville, *Corr.,* p. 333.

(44) He gained much knowledge of China, however, from a friend and colleague in the diplomatic service, Count de Rochechouart, who served for a time in the legation at Peking.

Minister had threatened, should he decline the first post offered him, to place him on the retired list. (45)

In the autumn of 1861 he returned to Persia, as Minister, remaining there two years. During these years he became interested in the problem of French influence in the Near East. He saw an opportunity for France to obtain for herself a strategic position, politically, between England and Russia, and he offered his services to the government as intermediary. He wished to carry on negotiations with the khanates of Central Asia with the object of preparing the way for a mission which his friend, M. de Rochechouart, had been urging on the government. The ministry in Paris, however, looked upon the scheme with disfavour. Gobineau may have been a little too insistent in presenting his arguments in favour of the plan, for, in 1864, instead of sending him to Constantinople, where, as his biographer Basterot points out, his knowledge of the Near East would have been extremely valuable, (46) he was given the secondary post of Athens.

He spent four years in Greece, years rich in literary effort. The works of this period include the voluminous and erudite *Histoire des Perses* (*1869*), the *Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* (*1865*), a volume of short stories entitled *Souvenirs de Voyage* and a volume of poems entitled *Aphroëssa*. In addition to these literary labours he became interested in sculpture. The Gobineau room at Stasbourg contains a number of examples of his talent, notably a plaster bust of Amadis, a bust in marble of Dante's Beatrice and a statuette of Dante's Pia di Tolomei. Towards the end of his life, says Schemann, Gobineau looked upon sculpture not merely as an avocation, like Goethe's interest in painting, but as a form of work for which he was peculiarly fitted. (47) His letters at this time are full of his enthusiasm for his statues. (48) When he left Greece he continued his sculpture, finishing among other things a large

(45) Op. cit., p. 340.

(46) *Essai:* Introduction to second edition, p. xxv.

(47) Scheemann (*Die Gobineau-Sammlung der Kaiserlichen Universitäts-Landesbibliothek zu Strassburg*, 1907, p. 26): "Vielmehr bedeutete ihm die Skulptur nach seiner eigenen innersten Ueberzeugung mehr und mehr Hauptform, mittels welcher der in ihm lebende künstlerische Drang nach Betätigung rang. Keiner anderen Arbeit hat er mit gleichem Eifer und Enthusiasmus obgelegen."

(48) "Décidément la sculpture est le summum de l'esprit humain. Je ne vois rien au-dessus", he writes to his sister Caroline in 1864 (MS. 3520).

statue for the Lago Maggiore, a bust of the Queen of Italy, ordered for Sicily, and a score of others. (49)

Gobineau found in Greece all that he had dreamed. His letters are full of praise of the Greek landscape. (50) Some of this beauty he has described in his short story *Akrivie Phrangopoulos* which appeared in the *Souvenirs de Voyage*. He was charmed not only with the natural beauty of the country but also with the wealth of works of art in the museums and with the number of people of refinement and merit with whom he was able to associate. Here as elsewhere he was able to seize upon the vital spirit of the country's culture and to make that spirit part of his own. For him Greece meant the great artistic period of Pericles, just as Italy meant the Italy of Michael Angelo, and his keen mind reached back into the past in an effort to imitate the plastic beauty of the Greek masterpieces.

This love of Greece, however, was almost entirely a love for her past and had nothing in common with the philhellenism of Byron and other nineteenth century enthusiasts. "Pour Gobineau," says Lange, "la Grèce est divine; malheureusement il y a des Grecs." (51) And in these Greeks he saw not the descendants of the men of the Periclean age but those of the men whom Alexander, the great corrupter, had made decadent by his introduction of Semitic blood. In Greece, as in Italy, Gobineau saw striking proofs of his theories of decadence through blood mixture.

It was this desire to see in the landscape of a country the vision of the panorama of its history that caused Gobineau to dislike Brazil, where he was sent in 1868. (52) The tropical landscape held no charm for him. He contemptuously calls them "paysages inédits," a phrase which expresses his habit of connecting geography with history. Furthermore he saw in the people a striking example of utter decadence through race mixture. He succeeded, however, in making friends here, as elsewhere. Among the chief of

(49) *Briefwechsel Gobineaus mit A. von Keller*, letters of Dec. 10, 1875 and Oct. 17, 1877.

(50) Schemann, *Biog.* II, 5 sqq.

(51) Op. cit., p. 141.

(52) Schemann (*Biog.* II, 114) asserts that Gobineau expected that the next step in his diplomatic career would be from Athens to Constantinople. It is at any rate certain that Gobineau ardently wished to represent his country in the Turkish capital, for he felt that his knowledge of the problem of the Near East peculiarly fitted him for the post.

these was the emperor Dom Pedro, a ruler of unusual intelligence, (53) who took a great deal of pleasure in the keen mind and brilliant gifts of the Frenchman. The monarch (whom Gobineau compares with Philip III of Spain, as painted by Velasquez) discussed Stendhal and other French writers with him and turned Gobineau's attention to Camoens and to the Spanish masterpieces. When this ruler visited Europe in 1876, Gobineau, with the consent of his government, acted as his cicerone during his travels through Russia, Turkey and Greece. During his stay at Rio he wrote a part of *Amadis* and also the unpublished poem *le Paradis de Béowulf*.

The war of 1870 found him at his estate of Trye in Normandy, and, when the invaders came, his knowledge of German and his admiration for German culture gave him the chance to act as intermediary between the German troops and the local population. He was soon on good terms with the young German officers quartered on him and, gaining their confidence, he was able to obtain from them concessions which relieved the situation in the local towns. He was instrumental in reducing the war contribution exacted from his department from eleven and a half million to two million francs and at the close of the war the town of Beauvais officially expressed their gratitude for his services.

Gobineau, among a very small minority in France, had no illusions as to the outcome of the war. He knew, probably too well, the weakness of the country and the strength of Germany. In this, as in every other situation and experience, he saw a proof of his theories. The French, like the Greeks before them, were affected by the fatal virus of race mixture. "Sedan n'est qu'une réplique de Chéronée." (54) He planned to write a book on the war and the causes of everything that had happened to France, based upon his experiences and observations in different countries, but the work was not published until his death and then only in part. (55)

Basterot tells us that attempts were made at this time to persuade him to enter the Chamber or the Senate, but he resisted them, being content to live a rural life on his estate. (56) The war had cut off most of his funds, and he was forced to resort once more to his pen

(53) For an account of Dom Pedro see Schemann, *Biog.* II, 132.

(54) Lange, p. 183.

(55) *Ce qui est arrivé à la France en 1870*, Schemann, *Biog.*

For fragments of this work, see *Europe*, Oct. 1, 1923. A German translation appeared in Leipzig, 1917.

(56) Op. cit., p. xxvii.

for a living. Through his friend von Keller he obtained work from some of the German periodicals. At this time, too, he had hopes of taking Villemain's place in the Academy. He writes his friend Prokesch-Osten (June 3, 1870) : "Mon *Histoire des Perses* est fort bien reçue et mes amis me portent à l'Académie Française pour remplacer M. Villemain." But in October of the same year we find him writing the same friend that he had given up the idea of entering the Academy. (57) He treated this and other misfortunes philosophically, however. "La grande probabilité," he writes to Keller, "est que je sortirai de là ruiné; je me relèverai, soyez-en sûr. Ce qui ne l'est pas moins, c'est qu'aucun homme moins que moi n'a le droit de médire de l'humanité. Je suis comblé de l'affection, du dévouement, de la tendresse de mes amis; de tout côté on s'occupe de moi." (58) In spite of this burst of optimism, however, it is plain that the events of these stormy days had made a great and painful impression on his mind. Already pessimism was beginning to colour his philosophy. He mistrusted the rulers of his nation and no longer had any faith in panaceas of government. Bad as conditions were, however, he saw worse things ahead and was overcome with a sense of futility and helplessness, feeling that the coming catastrophe could not be averted. (59)

Countess de la Tour has given us the following portrait of the Gobineau of this period :

> Il était grand, mince et très bien fait. La distinction de son maintien, l'aisance de ses manières, la finesse aristocratique de ses mains, frappaient tout d'abord, comme une réminiscence d'un portrait de Van Dyck. Il avait l'ovale de la figure allongé, le teint pâle, le front haut, les traits réguliers, des cheveux qui, autrefois châtain clair, devinrent de bonne heure chaudement argentés. Ses yeux brun doré, très fendus, fixaient volontiers la lumière, et cette lumière qu'il aimait tant, dont il n'avait jamais assez, sa physionomie semblait la réfléter. (60)

The Thiers government appointed him minister to Sweden in

(57) Schemann: *Biog.* II, 267.

(58) Op. cit., p. 92.

(59) *Ibid.* p. 44. Lange (p. 166 sqq.) thinks that Gobineau began in Rio de Janeiro to adopt the attitude of proud stoicism which was the philosophy of his last years.

(60) Introduction to *Amadis* (Paris, 1887), p. xiv.

Wilfred Blunt, who visited Gobineau at Trye in August 1871, writes about him as follows: "Gobineau is a man of about 55, with grey hair and moustache, dark, rather prominent, eyes, a sallow complexion, and tall figure with a brisk, almost jerky gait. In temperament he is nervous, and energetic, in manner observant but distrait, passing rapidly from thought to thought, a good talker but a bad listener. He is a savant, novelist, poet, sculptor, archeologist, a man of taste, a man of the world. In thought broad but dogmatic and little capable of sympathy with a view other than his own, essen-

1872 and for the next six years he represented his country at Stockholm. They were years of great, artistic and literary activity. In addition to finishing a number of striking pieces of sculpture he wrote several of his best works while at the Swedish capital. (61) Among them were *Les Pléiades* (his "*Wilhelm Meister*," as he called it); *La Renaissance,* considered by many to be his best work; the *Nouvelles Asiatiques,* and a part of *Amadis.* In 1872 he contributed several articles to *Le Correspondant,* and in Oct. 1875 he speaks of being in the midst of "recherches scandinaves, runes, sagas et choses semblables." (62) In spite of his work, which was always to him the surest source of pleasure and satisfaction, he was not happy. He was becoming tired of the tortuous ways of diplomacy and he grew more and more difficult as a colleague and as a public servant. The views that he held of humanity in general, while they affected his personal relationships very little, were not of a nature to assist him in his role of representative of France at a foreign court. It was probably not a matter of surprise, then, when he was relieved of his post by the Duc Decazes in 1877.

"Il ne fit aucune observation contre cette injustice," says Basterot, "mais il en garda un vif ressentiment." (63) This was the sombre period of his life. For some time he had been suffering from ill health. In addition to the fevers caught in Brazil and Athens he speaks of all the fevers which impatience, anger and indignation can cause. (64) His differences with his wife had led to a final separation and he seems also to have lost the sympathy of his daughters. (65) His financial condition was unsound. His fortune had been spent wiht a great lord's contempt for money matters and

tially an egoist. This does not hinder him from being a man of warm affections and much kindness of heart, directing him towards the good of his neighbours. Without much religion or political faith, he is by tradition both catholic and royalist. His life in the East has given a metaphysical colour to his philosophy, which one would have expected to be more plainly materialistic. He holds a middle course between materialism and spiritualism, which he thinks will be the philosophy of the future" (quoted by Schemann, *Quellen,* II, 309).

(61) Lange, p. 193.

While at Stockholm he renewed his interest in the question of race. What he saw in the country convinced him that its people were the true "fils de roi", the pure Aryan stock. He admired the fundamental paganism of the people and their fidelity to their old political institutions.

(62) Schemann, *Biog.* II, 366.

(63) Op. cit., p. xxix.

(64) *Briefwechsel Gobineaus mit A. von Keller.* Letter dated Sept. 27, 1871.

(65) Letter of Diana to her aunt Caroline, July 26, 1880 (MS. 3521).

he had been forced to get rid of the castle at Trye. In spite of his work, the tremendous mental activity which was his chief delight, and the friendships which brought him so much satisfaction, he was becoming a misanthrope. "L'amour," he writes to Prince d'Eulenburg, "est ce qu'il y a de meilleur au monde. Ensuite, le travail. Ensuite, il n'y a rien." (66) His relations with his official superiors and with his reading public had often been disappointing and had left, on many occasions, the sting of ingratitude. To these personal considerations was added the influence of the philosophy of decadence to which he adhered so consistently all his life. (67) These things made him pessimistic and even bitter. In his letters he tried to show a brave front but he could not deceive his friends, who greatly regretted this state of mind. (68)

Among the chief friends of these later years were the young Prince Philip zu Eulenburg, (69) Count and Countess de la Tour and Richard Wagner. Count de la Tour came to Stockholm as Italian minister at about the same time that Gobineau arrived in the Scandinavian capital, and there soon sprang up a close friendship between the Countess (then thirty years of age) and the French diplomat. Countess de la Tour brought to the Frenchman a lively and an intelligent sympathy and an appreciation for his talents, which were gratefully received by the author of *Amadis*. This platonic friendship seems to have been, toward the end, the one bright spot in Gobineau's life. After his death the Countess had a great deal to do with the creation of the cult which grew around his name. (70)

Gobineau met Wagner for the first time in 1876 and again

(66) Quoted by Robert Dreyfus: *La Vie et les Prophéties du comte de Gobineau* (Paris, 1905), p. 334.

(67) He writes to Prokesch-Osten (March 11, 1873): "De toute l'Europe je n'aime que ce qui n'est plus et ce qui est me paraît une si triste préface aux plus tristes chapitres qui suivront, la cuistrerie est tellement triomphante et certaine de triomphes plus grands que tout ce qui n'est pas à moitié mort ne vaut pas la peine d'être vu." (MS. 3524).

(68) Keller writes (July 30, 1879): "Mit Schmerz sehe ich, dass Sie mehr und mehr dem Pessimismus in den Anschauungen des Lebens sich hingeben." To which Gobineau replies: "Je ne suis pas si pessimiste que vous dites et je vous assure que je suis de la meilleure humeur du monde" (op. cit., p. 156).

(69) Prince d'Eulenburg has written an account of Gobineau's life in Sweden, entitled "Eine Erinnerung an Graf Arthur Gobineau" (published first in the *Bayreuther Blatter*, 1886).

In France he met, or corresponded with, A. Sorel, Barbey d'Aurevilly, P. Bourget, Théodore de Banville and Saint-René Taillandier.

(70) Lange suggests that this friendship had much to do with the estrangement between Gobineau and his wife. Whether this be true or not it

in Venice in 1880. He spent several weeks with Wagner at Bayreuth in 1881 and a warm friendship sprang up between the two men. Wagner admired *La Renaissance* and many of the ideas of *Amadis* and the influence of the Essay is shown in his *Heroism and Christianity* where he makes use of Gobineau's theory of decadence through race mixture. In 1881 he dedicated to Gobineau an edition of his complete works. What Gobineau admired in the writer of *Parsifal* was not so much the music of his operas as the spirit and philosophy that dominated them. Overlooking the fact that they were impregnated with a Christian spirit and that they emphasized the element of regeneration, Gobineau saw in them a manifestation of a national individualism such as he considered the peculiar attribute of his pagan Aryan of the North. Much has been said concerning the influence of Wagner on Gobineau, and while it is true that certain parts of *Amadis* seem largely Wagnerian in spirit, there is little evidence to show that the influence was more definite than the general impression which one active mind often makes upon another. (71)

After leaving Stockholm he retired to Italy, where he devoted himself entirely to writing and to sculpture. He completed his family history, *l'Histoire d'Ottar Jarl et de sa descendance,* and worked on the last parts of his epic poem *Amadis.* Around him, in modern Italy, he continued to see striking proofs of the theory of race decadence and his gloomy doctrine began to weigh on his mind. He made several trips to Germany and to France, but his health gradually became worse and on the thirteenth of October 1882, returning from a visit to Rome, he was struck with apoplexy at Turin and died within a few hours.

The Gobinist movement in Germany, which kept alive the works

is significant that Madame de Gobineau did not travel to Stockholm as had been planned and that from that time on the separation between then. was never broken. The history of these last years of Gobineau cannot be written until the correspondence between the Countess and Gobineau is placed at the disposal of the public. This correspondence (part of the Gobineau collection at Strasbourg) is sealed until the year 1950.

(71) Thérive sees the influence of Wagner in the last parts of *Amadis* (A. Thérive: "Gobineau, poète", *Rev. Universelle,* April-June, 1922).

Schemann sees Wagnerian inspiration in the general conception of *La Renaissance.*

Seillière, however, argues that there was little influence, and his arguments sound convincing (Seillière, op. cit., Book III, chap. iv, p. 356 sqq).

For a discussion of Gobineau's influence on Wagner see Dufréchou: *Gobineau* (Paris, 1909), pp. 47-49.

and reputation of the author of the Essay, started before his death. He already had a number of admirers among the German scholars. Wagner brought him to the notice of Professor Ludwig Schemann who became his chief disciple. With the ardour of a true devotee Schemann has collected even the most minute evidence concerning his master and in several thick volumes has placed at the disposal of the public not only the facts of his life but also most of his less important works. It is to Schemann that we owe the publication or the re-issuing of more than half of Gobineau's literary works. Another of his disciples in Germany was the Anglo-Teuton Houston Chamberlain, whose book *The Foundations of the XIXth Century* is filled with Gobinistic philosophy, particulary those aspects which appealed about the same time to his great contemporary Nietzsche. The latter undoubtedly owed to the French writer some of the ideas behind his conception of the Superman. (72) In 1894 this interest in Gobineau was concentrated in the formation of the *Gobineau-Vereinigung,* of which Schemann was the first president. (73) In 1901 Madame de la Tour, the literary legatee of the author, surrendered to the Society his literary manuscripts and documents and in 1903 these were acquired by the University of Strasbourg.

In France, as we have already stated, the recognition of Gobineau was extremely tardy. Naturally his ethnological theories have never been popular in the land of his birth, but gradually he has acquired a reputation as a literary artist. It was André Hallays who, in 1899, (74) brought him to the attention of the French literary public. Then followed the works of Robert Dreyfus and of Ernest Seillière. Gradually the great majority of his literary efforts have been re-published, and since the war there has scarcely been a year which has not seen the enthusiastic reception of a new edition of one of his brilliant works. It is not out of place, then, to consider the literary merits of a man who today is being mentioned side by side with Stendhal, Mérimée and others who have definitely found a place in the history of French literature.

(72) For a discussion regarding the probable influence of Gobineau on Nietzsche, see Dufréchou (op. cit., p. 50 sqq).

(73) In 1906 the Gobineau-Vereinigung had 300 members (see Schemann: *Die Gobineau-Sammlung,* p. 39). It was dissolved in 1919 and a new society, entirely German, was founded with Schemann as president.

(74) André Hallays: "Le Vicomte de Gobineau", *Journal des Débats,* Oct. 6, 1899.

B. *Gobineau, Aristocrat.*

One of the most striking aspects of the writings of Gobineau is the fundamental unity and consistency of his philosophy. In a life so varied and for an intelligence sustained by such a wide range of interests, he changed to a remarkably small degree his main outlook on life. The aristocratic views which coloured his earliest writings shaped the greater part of his subsequent work. For anyone who wishes to understand Gobineau as a writer it is necessary, therefore, to understand his attitude towards the problem of the social classes.

"Je descends d'Odin!" If we desired to choose for the author of the Essay a device which would be most representative of his attitude towards his fellow men, we would need to go no farther than this exclamation of Gobineau, for it is the expression of that element which was the basis of his philosophy and which furnished the motive, if not the material, for a large part of his work. All his ideas, historical, sociological and ethnological, had as their centre the idea of aristocracy. Through whatever divisions of race, nation, family or individuals he made there run the same two strata of the noble and the ignoble, the "king's sons" ("fils de roi") and the "mud" ("la boue"). (75) To the former he gave the rôle of creators, of the carriers on of the sacred fire of spiritual progress, of all that separates Amadis from Caliban; to the latter the rôle of defilers of the stream of culture, the quintessence of all the forces of decadence.

From his earliest youth the author of the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl* had pictured himself as an "homme d'élite." This conviction of his aristocracy was not a mere pose or a reaction against the political disturbances of the time. It was at the very root of his being, arising from instincts acquired at his birth. (76) He nourished it in the feudal castle in Baden and during his early days in Paris. He was inspired by the glories of the past. He was fascinated by the story of the beginnings of his race. He connected himself continually with the Middle Ages, to him the period when European civilization was in its flower. (77) His name, he tells us in *Ottar Jarl*, (78) came from

(75) This epithet "la boue" appears frequently in his works. It is the title of one of the divisions of *Amadis* (livre III, chant 3).

(76) In his introduction to the Essay he says: "Je l'ai en quelque sorte commencé dès mon enfance. C'est l'expression des instincts apportés par moi en naissant" (*Essai sur l'Inégalité...*, avant-propos, p. XIX).

(77) Speaking of a visit to his sister, the Benedictine nun, Gobineau writes to Keller, August 14, 1868: "...Sie sehen wie wir im Ganzen Bruder und Schwester eine mittelalterische Familie sind" (*Corr.*, op. cit., p. 69).

(78) *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl*, p. 244.

the Romances, Gobineau or Gobinot being merely a derivative of Gauvain, taken by his ancestors at a time when it was the fashion to take a name from among the heroes of chivalry. His mind was constantly dwelling upon the period when the social classes were sharply divided, and these dreams developed in him the philosophy of the "good old times," which remained ineradicably a part of his system. Everything about him contributed to remind him of his noble origin. When he bought his castle of Trye it became for him the habitat of his Viking ancestors. As he describes the place to us in the pages of his family history, his mind takes him back along the road leading to the castle and he sees it not merely as a French highway but as a Roman road, and, going back farther into the past, as a path along which travelled the Gaulish predecessors of the Latins. (79) So he uses his imagination to conjure up from the past proofs of his aristocracy.

Fed by this imagination, as well as by his early environment, this conviction gradually pervaded his character and temperament. He acquired the manners of the aristocrat. His scintillating mind attracted to him many people and he was able to form sincere and long friendships. Nevertheless he always retained an impatience with mediocrity and with incompetence, in conversation as well as in action. As a young man and a minor official in the diplomatic service he had to learn to control this tendency. Tocqueville wrote him in 1856 advising him to be a little more affable with his colleagues and he implies that this lack of sociability might stand in the way of his advancement. (80) Later on this pride of race caused him to treat his inferiors with a disdain which they did not merit, and which gave his enemies a chance of accusing him of snobbery. (81)

(79) At Trye, Gobineau, like Scott at Abbotsford, filled the rôle of lord of the manor with the keenest satisfaction. His daughter Diana tells of his relations with his tenants: "Il causa avec sa belle manière aimable et franche de vieux gentilhomme français, offrant des cigares aux rouliers et aux laboureurs, faisant des compliments aux femmes, plaisantant avec les jeunes filles" (cited by Schemann, *Quellen*, I, p. 399). He took his duties as mayor of Trye very seriously and was delighted when he was elected as representative of the district of Chaumont-en-Vexin to the council of the Department. "Je savais que j'étais assez aimé chez moi," he writes to his sister Caroline, as he proudly describes the joy of the villagers at his election, "mais je n'avais nulle idée d'un enthousiasme pareil" (Schemann, *Biog.* II, 211).

(80) *Correspondance*, op. cit., p. 124.

(81) See, for example, the article by Frédéric Masson, *Revue Hebdomadaire*, Oct. 16, 1914.

He was a brilliant talker and of an extreme amiability to those who could meet him on an intellectual level, but he soon became bored by men not of his own mental caliber. "Dans la société des hommes," says Countess de la Tour, "une imperceptible nuance de hauteur se devinait dans le regard, dans le redressement de sa taille." (82)

The "hauteur" of a man descended from Odin! The glamour of his lineage often completely absorbed him. At times it assumed an almost mystical aspect. His friend Prince d'Eulenburg tells of an incident which happened while he was walking with Gobineau one day near Djursholm. They came to the ruins of a huge piece of masonry, evidently a city wall. "Ceci," exclaimed Gobineau, after looking at it for some time, "ceci fut la Burg d'Ottar Jarl." His friend's glance evidently showed questioning surprise, for he added with conviction: "Oui, c'est d'ici que je sors—*je le sens!*" (83) To him the fact of his noble extraction was the clearest fact of his existence. (84)

Around this sense of aristocracy he built a daring stucture of theory. (85) According to his system, developed in a remarkable chapter of the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl,* the steps in the development of human society are : the Species (*l'Espèce*), Variety, (*Variété*), the Race and the Family. The human species has only a few characteristics peculiar to itself. Its superior intelligence, with sensations of a more lasting nature, produce desire, fear and restlessness. (This restlessness causes the migration of tribes and operates geographically from east to west.) The Species produces Variety, which is affected in a general way by outside conditions of cold or heat and of latitude or altitude. The Variety is divided into Races, which, in

(82) Introduction to *Amadis,* p. xv. "Il avait l'apparence légère et superficielle," says his daughter, the baroness Diana de Guldencrone, "d'un grand seigneur du temps de Louis XV." This aristocratic deportment was shown even to members of his own family. "Malgré sa bonne humeur et ses plaisanteries," says his daughter, "je n'ai jamais été familière ni à l'aise avec lui" (Strasbourg MS. 3523).

(83) *Bayreuther Blätter,* IX, 5 : "Eine Erinnerung an Graf Arthur Gobineau", by Philip von Hertfeld (Prince Eulenburg). Quoted by R. Dreyfus, op. cit., p. 313.

(84) Lange (p. 19 N.) shows how the aristocratic prejudic of Gobineau constantly obtrudes in the Essay. This same profound reverence is shown in a letter to his sister Caroline dated Oct. 11, 1872, in which he tells of a visit to "les tombeaux des dieux Odin, Thor et Frey", near Upsala (MS. 3520).

(85) See *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl,* livre III, chap. 5, "Persistance Ethnique." Mme Renan in a letter to the author (Nov. 8, 1879) calls this chapter "une philosophie complète de l'idée de race" (MS. 3526).

their turn, show a more sensitive reaction to environment. The Race is divided into families. The development is an upward one from Chaos to Titan, from Titan to God (Gobineau also calls this step Odin or Race), from Odin (or God) to Family. The highest unit in the sequence is the Family. It is the stage of perfectibility to which the progression is moving, "la démonstration de tout l'ensemble, la fleur et le fruit de l'arbre." (86)

Just as the Race carried with it certain peculiar traits which cannot be wholly eradicated, even under the stress of blood mixture with other races, so the family preserves this immutability of characteristics. Without mixture the race would remain the same, preserving its original temperament, its original character. In the same way without the disturbing influences of foreign alliances the family would be the same. These mixtures, however, are inevitable. In them the defiling element is the female. It is the male element which preserves the purity of the original stock, which constantly opposes itself to the maleficent effects of mixture. These are the main elements of Gobineau's theory of the claims of aristocracy. They differ little from the arguments put forward in the Essay except that they attempt to prove, in the presence of the fact of general decadence, the possibility of the preservation of the élite.

Considering the importance of the family in Gobineau's system, it is easy to see why he looked upon the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl* as the climax of a trilogy of which the Essay and the *Histoire des Perses* were the first two units. In the Essay he applied this system of his to mankind as a whole; in the *Histoire des Perses* he showed its application in the development of a single family, tracing the history of the family, its rise, its development under the urge of its primitive virtues and its decline through the agency of exterior degrading influences, pervading its blood through intermarriage. (87)

The *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl* was (with the exception of *Amadis,* published posthumously) (88) the last of Gobineau's works, published when the author was sixty-three years old, three years before

(86) op. cit., p. 288.

(87) "Ce livre va raconter l'histoire d'une famille et exposer la situation où la marche des temps, le concours des circonstances, les qualités, les défauts inhérents au sang de cette famille en ont placé les générations et les individus... le but a été d'ouvrir les tombes des ancêtres, de considérer les visages et les contenances de ces êtres disparus, de voir à quel point les fils ont ressemblé aux pères, les neveux aux oncles, les cousins aux cousins et ce qu'il faut induire des rapports et des dissemblances" (op. cit., livre I, chap. I).

(88) The poem *Amadis* was never actually completed.

his death. It was not, however, a conscious literary effort, conceived and executed at a particular time, but rather a gradual development. From the age of fifteen the author had begun to gather the materials which he used in the book. On none of his works did he spend more time or lavish more erudition. He seems to have left few sources untouched which might have contributed to a better knowledge of his subject. (89) In a volume of some four hundred pages he unrolls before us the pageant of his ancestors, a colourful panorama of men and women, on a background composed chiefly of violence, sometimes of tragedy and always of action.

The family history as a literary type is not a new one. The purpose of such a book is generally the relation of the merits of the family in question. Its weakness lies in the fact that the characters are generally idealized to the extent of giving a distorted idea of the relation of these men and women to the life of their time. This failing Gobineau has, to a remarkable extent, avoided. One of the merits of the book lies in its frankness. There is very little attempt to eulogize the many individuals who carried on the family traditions through the centuries. Rather the individual is lost sight of in the larger unity, the family. The author is not so much concerned with the excellencies of their character as with their relation to the great purpose, the passing on of the Gobineau strain. In spite of this, however, there are in the book many characters which stand out as being worthy of observation. The chief interest of a book of this kind lies in the relation of the individual figures to the background of history which is described more or less indirectly in the work. From this point of view the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl* is a successful book. There are, of course, many pages where the recital of mere biographical data, and the reiteration of colourless facts, weary the reader. The historical conscience of the author was too keen, his reverence for his subject too great, to permit him to omit that which was merely uninteresting. There are, on the other hand, pages in which the men stand out in bold relief against the background of their time. Ottar the Viking, Hugues II the feudal baron, Matthieu Gournay the soldier of fortune, Etienne Govyneau the wealthy burgher of Bordeaux, Pierre-Joseph the libertine, Melac the swashbuckler, and other figures which flash across the canvas are real, living individuals and also

(89) See the wide range of literature indicated in the bibliographical references added to the pages of the work by the author.

types of their age. They are all men. One searches the pages in vain for a well drawn "portrait" of a woman. These always remain in the background. The wife of Hauk who received the burning head of Saint Hildevert in her lap (90); Basilée who was inordinately fond of lapdogs (91), to her eternal undoing; Françoise de Massips who brought to her husband a dowry of a thousand francs (92) and Isabeau de Jeannet who brought a million and a taint to the Gobineau blood (93) — we would like to know more of them. Emphasis on the women of the family would, however, have been contrary to the author's ideas, for his philosophy does not allow any strong women. For Gobineau it is the female who brings impurities into the blood of the race. In the history of the family, therefore, it is the male who is important.

The great historical figures, William the Conqueror, Richard Cœur de Lion, Saint Louis, Lanfranc and Anselm intrude little in the story, but they serve to create a noble atmosphere for the illustrious family. The unity of purpose behind the work and the subordinating of all the characters to this purpose gives the work something of the fascinating illusion of a novel, though Gobineau warmly rejected the suggestion of his friend von Keller that this had been his intention. (94)

The paradoxes in the book are somewhat bewildering. (95) The theory of the introduction of impurities into the race stock through intermarriage may be tenable when it is applied to a race or a nation as a whole, where it is possible to distinguish group differences and peculiarities, but it presents great difficulties when applied to the individual. The character of the individual is dependent on so many things; it is subject to such delicate influences of environment and training; it is so much a victim of circumstances that it is an unenviable task to trace characteristics through a long line of individuals. A new environment, imposed through several generations, may entirely change certain traits of character, or certain social habits.

(90) P. 36.
(91) P. 70.
(92) Livre II, chap. VIII.
(93) P. 390.
(94) P. 167.
(95) One of the weak points in the work is the hiatus between the pre-Bordeaux and the Bordeaux periods of the family history. Gobineau himself realized this. "Ce diable de lacune de 1453 à 1550 est le malheur de ma vie", he writes to his sister in Jan. 1867, and he spends a great deal of energy in filling this gap (Schemann: *Quellen*, I, 23-25).

Gobineau gives an example of this when he tells of the participation of the family, during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, in the life of commerce. What Gobineau sees in this change, however, is only a temporary suspension of the functioning of family characteristics and not a permanent change in the moral qualities of the group.

The eminent French critic and historian André Hallays (96) has praised the conscientious historian in Gobineau. It is true that the author of the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl* has attempted to deal dispassionately with the facts of history, avoiding the prejudices often possessed by writers dealing with personalities rather than facts. Gobineau, in the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl,* used the same method that he used a few years previously in the *Renaissance.* He has treated history as a panorama of richly coloured, highly significant scenes, where certain figures stand out from time to time as representatives of their age and as leaders of the onward course of history. (97) In the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl* the execution of this method suffers in comparison with the book on Italy in that the author has an object in view apart from the purely historical one. For the main purpose of the *Histoire* is autobiographical. It is the life of the family, of *his* family, which he is relating; a life which to him is as closely coordinated, as coherent as that of any individual, for the stream of blue blood flows on uninterruptedly from Ottar the Viking to Thibault Joseph the legitimist. What Gobineau saw in the procession of aristocratic figures across the pages of history was not the individuals but the strain of Northern Aryan blood, dominant, continuous, insistent, retaining its nobility despite impurities and bringing to him, Arthur Joseph de Gobineau, a gentleman of the nineteenth century, the gift of a splendid heritage. (98) He saw no weakness in his thesis, no inconsistencies in his treatment, only the one vital fact of the family, the "être par excellence."

The idea of selection or superiority involved in the word "aristocrat" has bean applied to three different types of people. There is first the aristocrat of riches or position, the man who has inherited

(96) A. Hallays : "Le Vicomte de Gobineau," *Journal des Débats,* Oct. 6, 1899.

(97) For a discusison of this treatment of history see below chap. IV, "The Historical and Oriental Works of Gobineau."

(98) He writes to his sister Caroline (Nov. 7, 1867): "Où trouves-tu que nous sommes dégénérés ? Je ne me trouve pas dégénéré, mais bien le monde qui m'entoure" (quoted by Schemann: *Quellen,* I, 48).

a fortune or who, for some service to the State, has been given a title. This class, according to Gobineau, would include those who are titled through the good fortune of some particular ancestor. He condemns this type as being a false aristocracy and he comments ironically on the edict of Louis XIV which made eligible to the honour of riding in the king's carriage only those who could trace their lineage back to 1309. (99) This was making mere age the desideratum of nobility. It allowed flunkeys and serfs, upstarts of all kinds, to stand with the noblest in the land. Age alone cannot produce an aristocrat. Still less can the whim of a monarch do so. Not all the splendours of Napoleon's court can in any way alter the fact that his ready-made nobility are nothing more than *parvenus*. Neither can riches buy aristocracy. In the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl* he shows that a fortune is sometimes a hindrance rather than an aid to aristocracy.

The second type, the "natural aristocrat," is evolved from our modern ideas of democracy. He has been best defined by Emerson. (100) He is the man who, by certain innate traits of character or intellect, forces himself into a position of leadership. "The man of honour is a man of taste and humanity... he is a *democrat*," says Emerson. He is the natural leader, the aristocrat through force of character (for birth, as a standard of aristocracy, has "been tried and has failed"). The great man of Emerson is above his fellows, but only by force of talents and character, and his "honour" is always related to his "humanity," that is to his power to sympathize with the ideas of the people, and to lead them. In a nation which idealizes this type the supreme example is found in Abraham Lincoln. (100a)

(99) *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl*, p. 305.

(100) *Lectures and Biographical Sketches*, "Aristocracy" (1848). Emerson, like Gobineau, made self-reliance the chief virtue of the aristocrat ("self-reliance, which is the patent of royal natures") but adds to this the gifts of: (1) commanding talent, (2) genius, that is the power to affect the imagination and (3) elevation of sentiment. Like Gobineau he sees a certain incapacity in the people, but he differs from the French writer in his belief that they are capable of choosing their leaders, of rightfully detecting a capacity for leardership.

(100a) A modern writer, Mr John Buchan, has made use of Gobineau's *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl* in his novel *The Path of the King*. By means of a symbolic ring he traces the race of Thorwald the Viking down to Abraham Lincoln and thus gives a Gobinistic interpretation for the nobility of a character who is the most typical example of the "natural" aristocrat. The work is an interesting example of a literary application of Gobineau's mystic ideas concerning the race. The author, following his model, says in a kind of introduction to the novel: "The sons and daughters blunder and sin and perish but the race goes on, for there is the fierce stuff of life in it... Though nature

In his definition of the aristocrat Emerson holds a position antithetical to Gobineau's. The latter would have refused to recognize this type for he would not admit that it is possible in a democracy to produce an aristocratic superman. The harshness of his philosophy as well as its great inconsistency lies in this refusal to recognize the possibility of the "natural" aristocrat.

The third type of aristocracy is that based on noble lineage, on a long line of ancestors descending from men of noble origin and attainment, who have kept the original stock more or less pure. This, as we have seen, is the Gobinist idea of aristocracy. Its test is in the blood. Not the power of wealth nor the brilliance of complicated escutcheons but the heritage of a pure stock—this alone can produce the "homme d'élite."

What, then, we may ask, are the qualifications of this "homme d'élite" ? How is he to be distinguished? In the theory of the inevitable decadence of the race and in the idea of the survival of the aristocrat there seems to be a paradox. Gobineau himself has attempted to solve this problem. In his last novel, *Les Pléiades,* (101) which appeared five years before the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl,* he has given us a picture of the modern aristocrat according to his ideas. Lanze, Laudon and Nore, three men of different nationalities, are chosen to elucidate his theories. In one of the most noteworthy passages in the book these three men discuss the problem of aristocracy and democracy. "Nous sommes trois calenders, fils de rois," says the Englishman, Nore, and this is the text of the discussion which follows and which, in fact, is an epitome of the Gobinist philosophy. The true "fils de roi" has received

« du sang infusé dans ses veines les vertus supérieures, les mérites « sacrés que l'on voit exister en lui, que le monde ambiant ne lui a pas « communiqués... c'est une réunion complète en sa personne des élé- « ments nobles, divins, si vous voulez, que des aïeux anciens possédaient « en toute plénitude et que les mélanges des générations suivantes avec « d'indignes alliances avaient, pour un temps, déguisés, voilés, affaiblis, « atténués, dissimulés, fait disparaître, mais qui, jamais morts, repa- « raissent soudain dans le fils de roi dont nous parlons. » (102)

is wasteful of material things, there is no waste of spirit. And then after the long years there comes unheralded and unlooked for this day of the Appointed Time" (*The Path of the King*, Doran, N. Y., pp. 12-13). It is significant to note that the symbolic ring is lost by Lincoln and, apparently, the race ends with him. Mr Buchan adds to the Gobinistic mysticism the idea that the germ of the race persists from generation to generation in order that, one day, it may come to its full fruition.

(101) *Les Pléiades,* Paris ed., 1921, p. 18.

(102) *Ibid.*, p. 18.

According to this theory the title of aristocracy descends by a kind of unconscious selection. The aristocrat is the favoured member of the species upon whom the general laws governing the decadence of the race have not acted:

> Il y aurait, aujourd'hui, de par le monde, un certain nombre de personnes, hommes, femmes, enfants, de toutes nations possibles, dans l'individualité desquelles les atomes les plus précieux de leurs plus précieux ancêtres auraient réussi à se réunir, en expulsant ce que des intrusions fâcheuses y auraient apporté de mélanges stupéfiants ou énervants pendant des séries plus ou moins longues de générations précédentes, et il en résulterait qu'en fait, ces gens-là, dans quelque situation sociale que le Ciel les ait fait naître, seraient les vrais fils survivants des hommes de Rollon et voire des Amâles et des Mérowings ?

These are the élite. Their number cannot be large. Nore himself places it at not more than three thousand. These men are the natural leaders of mankind. They alone can hold back the general ruin which threatens the peoples of the earth. It matters little, apparently, in what station of life these men find themselves. Social position is an accident of fortune. Gobineau's theory differs from democratic ideas regarding the "natural aristocrat" in that it denies the possibility of a "fils de roi" appearing in a family of low origin.

In *Amadis*, a poem of five hundred pages, written in the epic style, Gobineau has attempted to give us a picture of the ideal "fils de roi." As the title suggests, the hero is the Amadis of the Spanish novel of chivalry, modified and idealized to suit the poet's purpose. This Amadis stands athwart the ruins of civilization, an aristocratic Colossus, holding up the standard of the Ideal. From the time when, as a young knight, he rides forth redressing human wrongs to the last scene when, physically speaking, he is overwhelmed by the forces of corruption, he is the master of the situation, so that even defeat means a higher and finer victory.

The Amadis of Gobineau is the ideal gentleman. He embodies the traits which go to make the Aryan "homme d'élite." Let us see what these traits are:

Physically he is an Aryan of the North. He has blue eyes, hair "blonde comme le soleil et fine comme la soie." He is tall of figure, broad of shoulder, with small hands and feet and small joints, brilliant eyes and animated face. By temperament he is passionate and haughty, a creature of impulse, of strong will power, making even his virtues the servant of his impetuous moods. (103) His actions are

(103) *Amadis*, p. 226.

controlled by the trinity of virtues: Love, Honour and Liberty (104), children, says Gobineau, of the Middle Ages. The poet describes, at great length, what is involved in these three virtues. Love is a passion which sets both man and woman on the same high level of intense achievement, stimulating instead of enervating. (105) Liberty has nothing to do with the modern idea of the term: freedom for the mass, based on equal social and political rights. This to Gobineau meant decadence. It means rather the opportunity given to the individual to express himself. For the best expression of the poet's idea of liberty we must turn to the unpublished poem entitled *La Guerre de Chiozza,* (106) in which he says:

> Oh! si la liberté n'existait pas! La boue
> Servirait de couche aux meilleurs.
> Personne n'aurait sur la joue
> Ni les pâleurs ni les ardeurs;
> On vivrait morne sur sa place...
> Aucun ne sentirait les feux de cette audace
> Qui fait affronter les hasards.....
> .....
> C'est la liberté qui le pousse,
> Soit guerrier, poète ou savant.
> Ils vont de secousse en secousse
> Criant, s'écriant en avant!

Liberty, then, is the right of the "fils de roi" to assert himself, to project himsef above the deadly mediocrity of the masses. In its insistence on achievement and action it is related to the third characteristic of the "fils de roi," Honour.

In the Essay Gobineau has made Honour the distinguishing trait of the white race, that which separates it from the yellow and black. (107) The term includes a number of virtues, such as Courage, a sense of Duty, Justice, Idealism, Energy. Of these by far the most important in the Gobinist system is Energy. In his insistence on the importance of this quality Gobineau is strikingly akin

(104) *Ibid.*, p. 337:

> La vie est éternelle, et l'Honneur bien suprême,
> Présent venu du ciel, et l'Amour, sont de même,
> Immortels, et tous trois avec la Liberté
> Composent les joyaux de la Divinité.

(105) Oriane, wife and companion of Amadis through his adventures, says:

> Un amour grand comme le nôtre
> Combat, reçoit, demande encore. (p. 145).

(106) MS. 3499. The poem is undated and dedicated to Countess de la Tour.

(107) Livre I, chap. 16.

to another great literary artist of his time, Stendhal. (108) Henri Beyle, like Gobineau, was a rebel against the society of his time. The essence of his aristocracy is a distrust of society which puts the individual on guard, and necessitates the development of a kind of protective colouring in their individuality. (109) Beyle, following the eighteenth century philosophers, put the main object of life in the search for happiness. In this search the individual had the right to use every weapon at his disposal. He had the right to be himself, to express his emotions and passions. It is in this insistence on the value of the passions that Stendhal most nearly approaches Gobineau. The author of the Essay would have undoubtedly agreed with Stendhal that "without passion there is neither virtue nor vice." (110) What Gobineau particularly admired was just that element in passion which raised it above the baseness of mediocrity, the vice of the mob. So we find in his works many references to violence in passion and in action. (111) In the poem of his youth *Dilfiza,* he speaks contemptuously of those who do not understand violent passions:

> Toi, dont l'esprit blasé, saturé de bonheur
> Frappe d'un lourd mépris le mal qui vient du cœur,
> Toi, qui sans passions, épuises tous les vices.
> Toi, qui ne connais plus que de pâles délices,
> Du festin de ta vie à la fin dégoûté
> Va-t'en !... C'est le malheur dans sa virginité !
>
> (*Dilfiza,* MS. 3497)

In his hands violence becomes not a vice but a virtue, because it is an outward manifestation of the aristocrat. In *Le Paradis de*

(108) These two writers have a great deal in common. Both of them were outside of the literary life of their time and were, for this reason, appreciated only after their death. Both of them were anti-christian. Beyle openly so, and Gobineau merely by inference. Both of them were cosmopolitan, anti-nationalist. They also meet in the eighteenth century spirit which gave colour to their writings; in their love of Renaissance Italy; in their gifts as observers. Both of them served as representatives of their country abroad (Stendhal was consul at Civita Vecchia). They differ, however, in their politics. Stendhal was a jacobin Bonapartist; Gobineau was a legitimist. Stendhal's belief in democracy is the antithesis of Gobineau's theories.

(109) Léon Blum, *Stendhal et le Beylisme,* p. 179. As the author points out, the Stendhalian "fils de roi," like Gobineau's, is not an "élite triomphante," but an "élite vexée et presque persécutée."

(110) Quoted by J. Huneker in his essay on Stendhal in *Egoists.*

(111) It is here that Gobineau also shows an affinity with Prosper Mérimée who wrote: "L'énergie même dans les mauvaises passions excite toujours en nous l'étonnement et une espèce d'admiration" (*La Vénus d'Ille,* Calmann-Lévy ed., p. 270).

Béowulf we find the strange figures of Don Juan and Lovelace mingled with those of Gil Blas and Falstaff as representatives of physical violence, and into the mystic regions of Heaven he introduces the sounds of strife. One of the strangest passages in the poem is the sudden appearance of a band of Viking warriors in bloody conflict, breaking into the ecstatic reveries of Beowulf on Love. It is his exaltation of violence which leads to the curious interpolation of the figure of the Count de Mélac in the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl.* This professional swashbuckler appears in heroic size because he typifies the energy which Gobineau wished to prove was the unique characteristic of his race. (112) Even Attila, the scourge of Christendom, is judged to be a man not as black as he is painted, because his terrorism is preferable to the violence of democracy. (113)

Gobineau, like Stendhal, puts energy above morality or ethics, and yet there was an important difference between the ideas of the writers. Stendhal's judgments in all matters were drawn exclusively from his own emotional experiences. His idea of energy is based upon natural instincts. For him energy is the result of his doctrine that the individual has a right to be himself, to express his own emotions. He insists on the supremacy of the heart over the head. In his cult of the emotions he approaches Rousseau. It is in the Rousseauistic element of his philosophy that he differs from Gobineau. For Gobineau's concept of aristocracy was governed by the psychology of Corneille rather than that of Rousseau. It was the Cornelian insistence upon the functions of the Will. The energy of his heroes: of Amadis, of Wilfred Nore and Harriet Coxe in *Les Pléiades,* of Michael Angelo in *La Renaissance,* lies in their suppression of the emotions. It is the victory of idealism. In Harriet Coxe, as in Damerones in *L'Abbaye de Typhaines,* it asserts itself through self-abnegation. In the figure of Casimir Bullet in *Les Pléiades* it develops a gloomy stoicism. His heroes and heroines, however much their energy may draw them to violence, are not overwhelmed by an indulgence in the emotions. They, therefore, avoid the egoism of the Stendhalian hero, of Julien Sorel or of Fabrice del Dongo. In this respect Gobineau is classic while Henri Beyle is romantic, for

(112) Livre IV, chap. 7. Among the MSS. at the Gobineau library is a large bundle of papers (MS. 3492) concerning M. de Mélac (chiefly copies of correspondence with his superiors), which testifies to Gobineau's keeping interest in this representative of Gobinist energy.

(113) *Manfredine,* an unpublished poem, MS. 3502, 1er discours.

the Stendhalian hero is a René plus the element of energy, while the Gobinist hero is subject to the classic element of discipline.

It is this element of discipline which is the keynote of the character of Amadis. It shows itself in a sense of individual responsibility. The dominant characteristic of Amadis is that, amidst all the ruin of hopes and systems around him, he marches on unquestioning and unafraid:

> Amadis marchait seul au milieu de l'ennui... (114)

He rejects and despises all feebleness before obstacles and all the enervating influences of self-pity. In some of the most striking lines of the poem Gobineau condemns what he calls "the doctrine of the broken heart" (la doctrine des cœurs brisés), (115) the absorption of the individual in his woes until his self-pity has sapped his energy and determination. The poet will have nothing to do with the "homme incompris," with melancholy reverie or any of the weaknesses of sentimental romanticism. This sense of individual responsibility also condemns any attempt to have the work of the individual done by a chimerical group known as society. Rejecting romantic melancholy the poet also rejects romantic humanitarianism. The man of honour is responsible to himself alone and he alone can work out his salvation. The knight must shield himself, too, from all that saps the moral fibre. Luxury is to be avoided. In his description of the court of Theophrastus (116) the poet has given us a picture of the enervating effects of this vice. This monarch is satisfied with mediocrity, comfort and success, and Gobineau pictures him as the great betrayer of the age of heroes. For Gobineau, then, Honour means energy guided and restrained by Discipline.

It is hard to recognize this trinity of virtues: Love, Honour and Liberty, as the poet interprets them, with the Viking virtues which Gobineau describes in the story of his ancestors. There is as much difference between Ottar Jarl or Hugues Gournay and Amadis, whose "front labouré touche le firmament," as there can be at any time between the Real and the Ideal. Hugues Gournay is the true mediaeval knight; Amadis is the mystical seeker of the Holy Grail. Yet, after all, there is a common ground on which they both meet, and this is to be found in their tireless individualism. The honour

(114) *Amadis*, p. 270.

(115) *Ibid.*, p. 244.

(116) *Ibid.*, Livre II, chant I.

of the Horseman is his indefatigable energy, his singleness of purpose, his reliance on his own sword and on his own strength. The surroundings change, but the characteristics of the "homme d'élite" do not. The ideal knight relies on the purity of his motives, the tirelessness of his idealism, in short on himself and on his own good sword. Amadis and Ottar meet on the same plane of personal responsibility, indefatigable and indomitable.

The basis of Gobineau's theory of aristocracy, then, is Individualism. The author of *Amadis* mistrusted any action on the part of the mass. He denied that the rule of the many was beneficial to mankind. He refused to admit the efficacy of collective effort as a means of uplifting society. For him leadership was a thing foreordained and could be entrusted only to those who by their blood and inheritance were destined to lead. This belief in the sacred rights of the few leads to the other important element of his doctrine of aristocracy: his hatred of democracy.

An examination of the nature and results of democratic government was one of the favourite themes of the nineteenth century writers. A score of years before the appearance of the Essay, Alexis de Tocqueville had written his *Démocratie en Amérique,* a learned and closely argued disquisition on the constitution of the first great democracy of modern times and the influence of its form of government on the social, intellectual and moral institutions of the country. For Tocqueville this rise of the masses towards a state of civil and political equality, which we call democracy, was the outstanding fact of modern history. Himself a legitimist and a member of a noble house of France, Tocqueville nevertheless examined this supreme phenomenon of modern times dispassionately, with the unprejudiced calmness of a political philosopher. He seems, however, to have communicated very little of this spirit to his protégé. For Gobineau also the presence of democracy was a supreme fact in modern life, but, unlike Tocqueville, the author of *Amadis* was unable to remain calm in the presence of this fact. The most unbalanced of his writings, the most bitter of his attacks are to be found in his comments on the great masses of humanity, who, from the eighteenth century on, have been striving to abolish privilege and establish the rule of the many. The devise of Flaubert, *La multitude voit bête,* might also be taken as Gobineau's motto, with this difference that, whereas the author of *Madame Bovary* treats the middle class with scorn, Gobineau treats them with hatred. (117)

In *Les Pléiades* (118) he divides Humanity into four groups: Fils de roi, Brutes, Imbéciles and Drôles. Robert Dreyfus has rightfully pointed out (119) that this is, in reality, only a dual division, since the last three groups constitute one class, divided according to their peculiar types of intelligence or temperament. For Gobineau there were in reality only two classes of men: the select few and the rest, and between these two classes he saw an eternal antagonism.

Gobineau's views were, of course, shaped by the political experiences through which France passed during his lifetime. Like many of his fellow countrymen he hated the revolution of 1830. "Toutes ces blouses sales m'ont produit un tel dégoût, ont tellement exagéré, si vous voulez, mes notions du juste et du vrai, que j'aurais été capable de me faire moine," he writes to Tocqueville. (120) For him the Revolution of 1789 was a national disaster which opened the door "à la violence et à toutes les atrocités démocratiques." (121) Not that the Revolution invented anything, for the idea of social law, displacing the law of individual right, he asserts, can be found as far back as Philippe le Bel. It merely beat down the dykes and let in the seas of mud, which are the people.

In *Olaf Tryggvason* he compares the crowd with the water-buffalo, "bête immonde et noire, amante du bourbier," who will attack the lion (the hero) only when in overwhelming numbers, and he continues:

> Ah! La multitude! Ah! le nombre!
> Privilège inique et honteux
> Que le ciel accorde à tous ceux
> Qui sont bons à pourrir dans l'ombre.

The poem *Manfredine* is full of this hatred of the mob:

> Les peuples avilis sont comme les pourceaux
> Couchés dans un bourbier.

In this dramatic poem Gobineau, according to his own confession (1[er] discours), has as his object a description of the worthlessness

(117) In this mistrust of democracy Gobineau approaches his fellow aristocrat and contemporary Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, whose Pantaléon Gambade («Le Socle de la Statue") has the same demagogic traits which Gobineau exemplifies in Theophrastus (H. Chapoutot: *Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, l'Ecrivain et le Philosophe.*)

(118) P. 20.

(119) Op. cit., p. 298.

(120) Op. cit., p. 298.

(121) *Ibid.*, p. 300.

and bestiality of the mob. The poem was written between 1838 and 1845, but a comparison of *Manfredine* with *Amadis* (written at the end of his life) shows how little his attitude changed. The only difference is that the vituperation of the poet is mixed, in the later poem, with a little more philosophy. Although he served under the bourgeois monarchy he had at heart little real sympathy with the government, and his opinions, restrained from being openly aired by his official position, found their vent in the hatred of the people who had brought about the fall of the Ancien Régime. (122)

The most noteworthy element in this distrust of the masses is its virulence. "Je suppose," says the Englishman Nore, in *Les Pléiades,* "que, dans le plan de la création, ces créatures ont une utilité, puisque je les y vois: elles nous gênent et nous les poussons. Mais je ne me figure et je ne vois rien de beau et de bon que sans elles." (123) In a striking scene in *Amadis,* Theophrastus, with the aid of the evil fairy Vivien, passes in review forces which are on their side in their war against the heroes. Among them he classes the disbelievers in God, the traitors and, lastly and chiefly, the common rabble:

> J'ai l'alliance de ces brutes
> Qui marchent sans trop savoir où.... (124)

and in the last book of the *Amadis* Ahriman, the arch-spirit of Evil, proudly boasts that this rabble is his peculiar invention:

> Moi, j'ai inventé la foule.... (125)

with which he goes about destroying "l'antique générosité."

Gobineau was obsessed with the stupidity of the masses. The peasant, he claimed, has never, in the whole course of history, risen against oppression or injustice. Under the impulsion of a temperament "héréditairement lâche et cauteleux," he is servile and rises only when urged by covetousness or envy. Never has he fought for Liberty. (126)

In spite of this essential stupidity, however, he finds the masses

(122) He writes to von Keller (Nov. 23, 1867): "Je n'ai jamais servi que sous l'Empire. Mon grand-père n'a jamais servi sous la République ni sous le Premier Empire, ni mon père ni mon oncle. Je suis donc le premier qui ait dans ma famille accepté les choses nouvelles. Ceci vous explique ma haine pour les révolutions et tout ce qui leur ressemble (op. cit., p. 54).

(123) Op. cit., p. 22.

(124) Op. cit., p. 284.

(125) *Ibid.,* p. 367.

(126) *La Fleur d'Or,* Paris ed., 1923, p. 22.

possess a ready instinct for destruction, which makes them strike heedlessly at sacred things.

« Les plus fermes grandeurs, ils les rendront suspectes! » (127)

It is the unthinking nature of the common people, their tendency to "love and hate according to the newspapers," that he particularly condemns. The lack of ability to think brings the masses under the control of demagogues, who play upon their emotions with high-sounding words and flattering phrases. Theophrastus, in the *Amadis,* is the type of monarch who is leading his people towards the path of decadence by his use of the demagogue's tactics. He holds out to them all the glittering allurements of a comfortable life, with enough of the sweets of a cheap idealism to deaden the remains of their conscience. With suave tongue he prates of the development of Society:

Et dans ces blancs palais hérités des vieux âges,
Que nous accommodions à de nouveaux usages,
Installer à toujours le profitable hymen
De la Raison guidant le Pouvoir par la main,
S'escortant tous les deux de la troupe choisie
Des Sciences, menant la sage bourgeoisie,
Se fondant sur la Force et sur la Liberté,
Attirant sur leurs pas la douce Egalité. (128)

Urgande, who in the poem typifies Truth, expresses the feeling of the poet when she answers:

— Quel terrible jargon!
C'est ainsi que contraste
Jehovah et Dagon!

Theophrastus is an apostle of the easy virtues. Urgande accuses him of prostituting the heroic virtues to the desire of the crowd for a facile morality. This deadening of all real moral values is aided by the indulgence of the crowd in their emotions, which shape and colour all their actions. Morality itself becomes mere emotionalism when the people's conscience is drugged by highsounding names and chimerical ideals. The cult of the shibboleth is one of the chief delights of the rabble, the cult of "la Phrase."

Au lieu de cette aridité
D'une exigeante vérité
Souvent pédante en mainte phrase,
Au lieu de la sincérité,
De la fâcheuse probité,
De l'insolente loyauté,
On a la Phrase ! (129)

(127) *Amadis,* p. 285.
(128) P. 417.
(129) P. 306.

Under the influence of this emotionalism the crowd attacks even the old virtues. One of the attributes of the rabble is its ceaseless desire for action. Like the lost souls in Dante's second circle the mob is swayed by the constant need of doing something, though not knowing what they wish to do.

> Ils courent, s'agitent, s'émeuvent et leur unique affaire est d'empêcher rien de s'arranger ni de s'arrêter. (130)

And the end of this constant movement, says Gobineau, is stupefaction, destruction, death.

One of the chief dangers the author of *Amadis* finds in the masses is their inability to choose their rulers. In the person of Barabbas he has given us a picture of a leader who rises to the rank of kingship without those natural qualities of greatness which alone justify the rank. By pandering to the tastes of the mob Barabbas rises from the "mud" to the purple (131). Then, once raised to the imperial seat, he forgets his humble origin and his boasts of democracy, and becomes the perfect upstart. The democrat turns tyrant. He demands baths of porphyry and beds of gold set with rubies. He revels in display and splendour. He becomes an epicurean despot after the fashion of the emperors of decadent Rome, admiring Nero because he spent more than any other man of his epoch. Then, to complete the metamorphosis, he wishes to make himself a member of the aristocracy. He wakes up one morning to discover that he has the traits of Amadis. He develops an aristocratic sensitiveness and, finally, he demands, as wife, a woman of the most noble family. The metamorphosis is complete.

Then the inevitable happens. The crowd turns against the tyrant. Barabbas appeals to Amadis, only to be rejected with scorn:

> Que suis-je sans l'Honneur, dont tu ne sais pas même
> D'où naissent la saveur et la grandeur suprême,
> Et qu'as-tu de commun avec la vérité,
> Source de la noblesse et de la liberté ?
> Tu vis sur la contrainte, et je suis la franchise ;
> Tu vis de la bassesse, et, s'il faut qu'on le dise,
> Je vis de l'orgueil qui n'a jamais plié
> Devant ce qui te charme, et que j'ai sous mon pié.
> .....
> Tu ne gagnerais rien à chercher l'Idéal. (132)

(130) *Les Pléiades*, p. 20. See also *La Renaissance*, p. 506:
"L'oiseau vit dans l'air, le poisson dans l'eau
Et la canaille dans le tapage" (Paris ed., 1922).

(131) Livre III, chap. 3, "La Boue".

(132) P. 475.

Amadis is the expression, in poetic form, of the same mystical ideas of aristocracy which Gobineau had expounded in more scientific language, twenty years previously, in the Essay. In the poem the idea of race degeneration is imbued with emotionalism. Arguments and theories give way to bitter invective on the one hand and mystic idealism on the other, as the poet is carried away by his devotion to the aristocratic ideal.

Gobineau's theory regarding the individual is a kind of determinism, in accord with the rest of his philosophy. Just as he saw the race predestined to decadence and ruin, so he saw the individual aristocrat predestined to be the leader of society. He alone, the "homme d'élite," is capable of keeping civilization from barbarism, and in proportion as the number of the select becomes fewer, so the race sinks lower and lower. In *Amadis* the pessimism of Gobineau's theories meets a new spirit of idealism, but, in the last analysis, the poem is fundamentally pessimistic. Noble as the conception of the "fils de roi" is, it does not in any way alter the central fact, the inevitable decadence and ultimate ruin of society.

Gobineau's doctrine of aristocracy is full of paradoxes and inconsistencies. The author does not find a place in his system for the genius, (133) the man who, in some branch of human activity or another, has an innate gift for leadership, intellectual, moral or physical. One of the obvious facts of human experience is that from time to time there appears in the human species a man who, without regard to birth or rank, is raised by natural qualities to undisputed leadership of his fellow men, leadership in the struggle against this very decadence which to Gobineau was such an overwhelming fact. The logical conclusion of Gobineau's system is that genius is impossible outside the stream of pure aristocracy. It eliminates the possibility of a Shakespeare, a John Wesley or a Pasteur. It eliminates, in fact, many of the great natural geniuses of history.

An equally important error in Gobineau's system is the assumption that aristocracy stands for idealism and democracy for materialism. His democrats are rank materialists while his aristocrats, from Odin down, are endowed with spiritual ideals that often stand out in strange contrast to their actual achievements. The Barabbas-turned-king, who is willing to accept any religion as long as

(133) This also is the weakness of the "Race, Milieu, Moment" theory of Taine, whom Gobineau resembles in his faithfulness to his deterministic system.

it can prove its utility and respectability, is not far removed from those Viking ancestors of the author who were willing to accept Christianity in order to earn the wages of Alfred of England, while they were just as willing to burn monasteries and harry the Church if it paid them to do so. Materialism cannot be proved to be the vice of any one period any more than idealism can be said to be the peculiar possession of any one class of society. When Gobineau lays the idealism of Michael Angelo in *La Renaissance* (134) to the fact that he is of noble blood, he is reaching a conclusion which is essentially fallacious. In his attacks on democracy the author of *Les Pléiades* has entirely overlooked the phenomenon that revolutions are generally started by men whose visions of the ideal are just as strong, just as noble, as those of any "fils de roi."

One of the most interesting of Gobineau's fallacies is his neglect of the role played by the intellect. As civilization becomes more complex, leadership becomes more and more an intellectual affair. Much of the supposed advance of civilization is illusory, it is true; but he would be a bold man who would deny that the sum total of ignorance is getting smaller and the demagogue, though still important, getting less influential. The intellectual advance of the masses is a fact and not a theory, a fact Gobineau did not face. It is difficult to determine exactly where Gobineau places the intellectual leader in his system. He himself was too much an ideologist and an admirer of creations of the intelligence not to see a certain nobility in the works of the mind. (135) And yet, by making the title of nobility entirely dependent on blood, he overlooked another kind of aristocracy, as potent in our modern times as that of race, the hierarchy of the intellect. It is obvious that directly Gobineau admitted that the mind could be a potent factor in determining leadership, his system of aristocracy would have fallen to pieces and it is for this reason, probably, that he ignored this phase of the subject.

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For Gobineau the highest morality was the personal conviction of what was right and the unswerving adherence to this ideal of

(134) *La Renaissance,* Cinquième partie, "Michel-Ange."

(135) In fact this fundamental nobility of all intellectual labour is the underlying idea in *Le Paradis de Béowulf.*

right in spite of all obstacles. He trusted the individual soul to work out its own salvation, just as he mistrusted the composite "soul" of the mass. He saw in this surrender of the individual judgment to the judgments of the crowd the greatest menace of modern times. The most important contribution that his theory of aristocracy makes is this recognition of the fundamental danger to the State when the mass, composed of individuals badly trained and poorly equipped mentally, try to frame its laws. The greatest merit of Gobineau's theories is that he has emphasized this weakness.

Gobineau's system, like that of his contemporary Taine, is a theory of determinism, and he suffers, like Taine, from the rigidity of his doctrines. They are full of paradoxes and inconsistencies. Having developed the idea of the inevitable decadence of the race early in life, Gobineau was brought face to face with the problem of explaining a number of phenomena. If, for example, the race is decadent, how do we explain in history the period of intense national vitality, giving rise to a golden age of letters or art? The author of the Essay has answered this argument, as we shall see later, by his theory of the "golden flower." (136) Then arises the problem of the individual genius and Gobineau has answered this by his conception of the "fils de roi." Here we immediately find a paradox in the conflict between the idea of an original aristocrat and that of the aristocratic family, as given in the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl*. How can we reconcile the idea of "unconscious selection" of the aristocrat with the picture of a family foreordained by its almost divine origin to be among the salt of the earth ? This question is unanswerable unless we look upon the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl* as being merely a work of retrospection, in which the author places his immediate forbears and himself in the procession of people who are headed down the road to decadence.

The dominant factor of the system, that which alone stands out above its inconsistencies and paradoxes, is the importance of the individual. From the beginning of time it has always been the single man, and not the group, who has counted. History is the sum of the stories of great men. (137) The viking who trusted only in his own strength and initiative; the knight who, like Amadis, relied solely on

(136) See below, chap. on "The Historical and Oriental Works of Gobineau."

(137) See below, chap. on "The Historical and Oriental Works of Gobineau."

his righteous cause and on his good sword ; the individual whose honour and energy place him above the mediocrity of the mass, these are the aristocrats.

In many respects Gobineau's ideas are similar to those of Thomas Carlyle, the other great exponent of hero-worship in the nineteenth century. Is it possible that the Frenchman may have been influenced by the writings of the great Scotch essayist ?

Both men, to some extent, see in history a movement towards decadence. Carlyle sees in the beginning the Divine and the Human in the closest contact. Then comes the period of the Hero-Prophet who stands as a revered interpreter of God. Finally comes the modern period, where the relation between Man and the infinite is being corrupted by the forces of materialism. Reviewing the history of the Aryan race, Gobineau sees a slow decadence starting at that particular moment when miscegenation began. There is however this difference in the ideas of the two men: with Gobineau the theory of decadence is the very root of his system, while with Carlyle it remains a part only of that mystic idealism which was the centre of his philosophy. Both writers surround that period of history in which the conception of Godhead was emerging with a kind of golden mist, but while the Odin of Carlyle remains, to a large extent, a symbol, the Odin of Gobineau is an historic personage, the founder of his line.

In the importance of the role of the "Able Man" both agree. Carlyle sees in this worship of the Hero one of the most striking facts of history: "For, as I take it, Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the history of the Great Men who have worked here." (137 a)

Like Gobineau's Amadis the hero of Carlyle has courage. He subjects himself to a stern discipline. He is an enemy of Egoism, for "egoism is the root of all faults." He is a Superior Man, a Superman.

The two writers agree in their distrust of Democracy. For Carlyle its pratical result is "zero." (137 b) It is against Nature, for "Nature's laws forbid democracy and assert the Universe to be a Monarchy and Hierarchy with the noble in high places and the ignoble in the low." (137 c) It is opposed to progress, "akin to atheism."

(137a) *On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History,* Lecture I, "The Hero as Divinity," Athenaeum Press, p. 1.

(137b) *Critical and Misc. Essays,* "Chartism," Scribner ed., IV, 159.

(137c) *Latter-Day Pamphlets,* «The Present Time."

(137 d) In short, Carlyle, like Gobineau, believes that aristocracy is the best form of government, that it is necessary, and thhat Society, without it, becomes Chaos.

At first sight these points of similarity are striking, but when we examine them we find that they arise from differences which are more fundamental. The most obvious difference is in the characters of the two men. Gobineau was an ideologist, a man whose chief interest was in social and radical phenomena. Carlyle's ideas were centred around the question of Man's relation to the Infinite. For him the greatest problem is the problem of religion, man's "vital relation to this mysterious universe." (137 e) His Hero is a link between man and God. "Loyalty to the Hero is loyalty to the Eternal." (137 f) This relation involves the idea of the brotherhood of Man. God, Hero and Man are the three indivisible links in the chain. This essential unity stands in sharp distinction to the duality of the Gobinist system : the division of the "fils de roi" and "la boue." Aristocracy for Carlyle means the presence of leaders, divinely marked, to lead the people. For Gobineau it means an élite whose chief relation to the masses is a fear of contamination. Aristocrat as he is by faith, Carlyle keeps in touch with the crowd, while Gobineau despises it.

When we examine the characteristics of the Hero, we find further differences in the ideas of the two men. In Carlyle's conception it is the moral factor that is supreme. "He belonged to the only true order of nobility, that of Just men," he says of Saint Edmund. (137 g) His Hero is the product of "Sincerity," a "superior insight into truth and loyalty to it." This "Sincerity" is unconscious in the leader, or rather, it is a part of the unconsciousness of his relations with "unseen reality." (137 h) Opposite this idea of "Sincerity" is the Gobinist characteristic of "Honour," which, as we have seen, is a type of *noblesse oblige,* of which the most important element is Energy. (137 i) The Gobinist aristocrat is a power to himself. Walking among the ruins of mankind he feels no relation to it. His code is not eternal Truth, as it is whith Carlyle, but a self-sufficiency or, at best, a noble

(137d) *Past and Present,* III, XIII.

(137e) *Heroes,* op. cit., p. 2.

(137f) Bliss Perry: *Thomas Carlyle and How to Know him,* Indianapolis, 1915, p. 172.

(137g) *Past and Present,* II, III.

(137h) *Heroes,* "The Hero as Prophet, op. cit., p. 52."

(137i) Carlyle calls Honour "an offspring of Vanity" (*Critical and Misc. Essays,* "Voltaire," Scribner ed., I, 420).

stoicism. Gobineau has one code for the élite and one for the crowd. Carlyle's code is single and absolute.

Another important difference between them lies in their attitude towards the rationalistic faculties in man. Carlyle is the champion of intuition. He opposes the glorification of the Mind. His distrust of the Encyclopedists rests on the fact that Diderot and his associates had too deep a faith in the power of the intellect. Diderot, he says, deified logic and therefore rested "on the thin rind of the conscious." (137 j) Voltaire, relying on the mind and loving Truth only "in a party spirit" was a mere "persifleur." (137 k) Their fault lay in allowing the intellect to usurp the place of the intuition. Opposed to this is the Gobinist theory of the glory of the intellect, which he develops in his poem *Le Paradis de Béowulf* and which shows itself even in the idealist Amadis.

Gobineau's theories lead to pessimism; Carlyle's lead to an idealism in which all men are joined in one common relationship to the Eternal.

There seems, then, no internal evidence to prove that Gobineau's theories owe anything to those of the author of *Heroes and Hero Worship*. Furthermore, there is no proof that the author of the Essay knew the works of Carlyle. His correspondence and manuscripts contain no reference to him. In Gobineau's works, particulary in the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl* (where he develops his ideas concerning Odin) and in the Essay, there are many citations of authorities. He mentions Munch, Hildebrand, Pertz and others, (137 l) and it seems safe to assume that Carlyle's name would have appeared had Gobineau made use of his works. This absence of external evidence, coupled with a lack of sufficient internal evidence, leads us to believe, therefore, that Gobineau's theories were not influenced by Carlyle. (137 m)

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Gobineau's aristocracy allows only one important relationship, that of the élite to the mass of humanity. The élite possess all the

(137j) *Crit. and Misc. Essays*, I, 177, "Diderot."

(137k) *Early Essays*, I, 426, "Voltaire."

(137l) Munch: *Del norska Folks Historie:* Pertz, *Scriptores rerum germanic.;* Hilderbrand, *Konunga-Bok;* Montelius, *La Suède préhistorique*, etc.

(137m) The spirit which dominates the poem *Olaf Tryggvason* (see below, chap. IV) is that which is behind Carlyle's graphic description of Olaf's

virtues which distinguish man as a thinking being. They create their own morality, which is a difficult code of Discipline and Energy. They represent Idealism in a world of ruin. The masses, on the other hand, have the monopoly of the vices. They represent cowardice, false ideals, selfishness, corruption, destruction. They are the great foe of Idealism.

Between these two classes of society there is a great gulf fixed. When Gobineau saw the necessity of bridging this gulf in order to explain the presence of the Leader, he developed his theory of the "fils de roi." But still the gulf remains, for the "fils de roi" is not a product of the people but it is — to use a biological term — a "sport" of the species, whose periodic appearance cannot be explained. The race continues moribund but the "fils de roi", appearing spasmodically, keep up the tradition of the élite. In this way Gobineau reconciles his aristocracy with his theory of the race.

His ideas regarding aristocracy are the result, chiefly, of training, environment and a personal reaction against the political trend of the times. His doctrine of miscegenation is the product of

expedition to Wendland in the seventh chapter of his *Early Kings of Norway*, but there is no real evidence that his inspiration came from this English source and we may safely infer that for this poem also Gobineau used the authorities cited above.

Was he influenced by Longfellow? The following lines from "The Challenge of Thor" (*Tales of Wayside Inn*, "The Saga of King Olaf"), reproduce in their short verse and the verve of their movement, as well as in their philosophy, the form and spirit of the verse of Gobineau's poem:

> Force rules the world still,
> Has ruled it, shall rule it,
> Meekness is weakness,
> Strength is triumphant,
> Over the whole earth
> Still is it Thor's day.

Gobineau knew some of Longfellow's works. We shall see (below, chap. IV) how he was influenced by Longfellow's translation of Dante. His small library at Strasbourg contains a copy of Hiawatha. We have, however, no proof that he ever read the *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, and in the absence of such evidence, any theory that his *Olaf* was influenced by the *Olaf* of Longfellow is based on mere conjecture.

The supposed teutomania of Gobineau is another point which links him with Carlyle. It would be difficult to prove that Gobineau had an overwhelming respect for German literature to the extent that Carlyle had. Gobineau admired Gœthe and Heine and other German writers, but he also admired—and to an equal extent—the classics of Greece and of his own country. The supposed teutomania of Gobineau is based not so much on his admiration of German customs and literature as on those theories of the Essay which have been taken up by the Germans to assist the cause of Prussian imperialism. These theories deal with matters of ethnology and a discussion of this phase of Gobineau's work is outside the scope of our subject.

his reading and thought, or, in other words, of his intelligence. The union of these two lines of thought, then, is a kind of agreement between the "heart" and the "head." The question of the relation between the "heart" and the "head" of any literary artist, between their emotions or feelings and their intelligence, is extremely important when we come to judge the value of their work. When there is an agreement between them we are likely to find a single point of view in the writer. This is the case with Gobineau. With him this alliance of the "heart" and the "head" produces a singleness of viewpoint. It creates a definite framework to all his ideas and determines the direction of most of his works, to whatever literary genre they belong.

CHAPTER II

GOBINEAU NOVELIST AND SHORT STORY WRITER

The work of Gobineau in the novel falls into two periods: that of his early manhood in Paris and that of his maturity. In the latter period he wrote the *Nouvelles Asiatiques, Souvenirs de Voyage, Les Pléiades* and *Adelaïde;* (1) in the first period he wrote *Scaramouche, Mlle Irnois, Le Prisonnier Chanceux, Nicolas Belavoir, l'Abbaye de Typhaines* and *Ternove.* (2)

The period of 1846-7, which marked such a prolific literary activity on the part of the young writer, was the time when he was struggling to make a place for himself in Paris. He had resorted to literature to gain a livelihood and the easiest means at hand was the writing of "feuilleton" novels.

The middle of the century was a time of dearth for the French novel. Martino suggests that the attacks of the critics had caused a temporary unpopularity. (3) This had been reflected in the sales of the best novels which had been reduced to half that of the period of their popularity. The reading public had turned to more facile forms of entertainment and these they found in the roman-feuilleton. It

(1) *Nouvelles Asiatiques,* Paris, 1876. *Les Pléiades,* Paris, 1874. *Souvenirs de Voyage,* Paris, 1872. *Adélaïde,* 1869, published posthumously in 1913.

(2) *Scaramouche,* 1846, appeared in *l'Unité,* 1844. *Mlle Irnois,* appeared in the *National,* Jan. 29-Feb. 20, 1847. *Le Prisonnier Chanceux* appeared in *La Quotidienne* with the title *Les Aventures de Jean de la Tour-Miracle,* 1846 (Paris, 1847). *Les Aventures de Nicolas Belavoir* appeared in *l'Union Monarchique* in 1847 and was published under the pseudonym Ariel des Fées, Paris, 1852. *L'Abbaye de Typhaines* appeared in *Le Conservateur,* 1847, and was published in Paris, 1867. *Ternove* appeared in *Le Journal des Débats,* Oct. 22-Dec. 23, 1847.

(3) P. Martino: *Le Roman réaliste sous le Second Empire,* p. 90.

was the period of the great popular novelists Dumas père, Paul de Kock and Eugène Sue. *Le Juif Errant* had appeared in *Le Constitutionnel* and had brought to the writer a hundred thousand francs and the editor twenty five thousand new subscribers. (4) The same author also gained an enormous popularity with his *Mystères de Paris,* which was widely copied, and *Le National, La Quotidienne, Le Constitutionnel, La Presse,* as well as sedate newspapers like the *Journal des Débats,* opened their columns to this form of popular literature. The literary leaders of this time deplored the bad taste of the reading public, which was causing the novel to lose itself in "la poursuite des bouges infects et des existences les plus immondes," as a critic of the time expresses it. (5) But authors could always be found who were ready to resort to this easy method of earning money. (6)

Gobineau himself joins in the chorus of regret and, in reviewing two novels of Balzac, in *Commerce,* he reproaches this writer for prostituting his genius in such a way. He seeks, however, to find excuse for this form of fiction and admits that the critic must find some way to regularize "l'invasion des barbares dans les domaines littéraires." (7) Two years after this critique he himself is in the midst of writing diligently for the same end.

There is, however, little reason for attempting to find an excuse for Gobineau's participation in this form of writing. He never engaged in the false psychology, that remnant of dead romanticism, which resuscitated the *femme incomprise* in the person of the prostitute; he never descended into the slime that made the writings of Sue, Soulié and others popular. Having engaged in this form of literature Gobineau seems to have thoroughly enjoyed his task, for the characteristic note of his works of this period is zest and good humour. (8) It is as if he had seized his pen saying; "Well, if this is what the public wants, let us at least enjoy ourselves writing it!" The result is a series of

(4) Alfred Nettement: *Etudes Critiques sur le Feuilleton-Roman,* chap. I.

(5) *Ibid.,* chap. i.

(6) In the article on Balzac, Gobineau says : «C'est le poing sur la hanche, l'œil en feu, la reproche à la bouche que la critique aborde d'ordinaire le roman feuilleton. Au premier mot elle le renverse, elle le frappe, elle accumule sur le malheureux les épithètes les plus infamantes, elle l'accuse de détruire toute littérature, de corrompre le goût, de fausser l'histoire, la philosophie, la morale, de pervertir les esprits, d'avilir les mœurs."

(7) *Commerce,* N° 303, Oct. 29, 1844, criticism of Balzac's *Grandeurs et Misères des Courtisanes* and *Esther.*

(8) His work was evidently not considered innocuous by every one, for we find Gobineau writing to his sister (July 18, 1847): "M. l'Abbé Noël a écrit à

works in which the author shows some of his most brilliant and attractive gifts as a writer. (9)

These gifts are perhaps seen at their best in *Nicolas Belavoir*. The plot is laid in the year 1588, and the story is a lively novel of adventure, with all the technical tricks that have made that form popular; political plots, wanderings from town to town, unexpected meetings on the highway, lovers, intrigues, daring feats of arms, women in disguise, abandoned babes, discovery of long lost children with the inevitable birthmark, haughty Spanish ladies, court fools, tumblers, bandits, freebooters, princes and rogues. Through a series of extraordinary adventures the lovers are married and the villains meet with their just punishment. The material is old, but the story is sustained by a delightful freshness of style and irrepressible humour. The author anticipates the interest of the reader and seems to revel in the adventures of his heroes. At times he forgets his role as mover of puppets and steps down to show the audience how it is done. Then follows an entirely personal comment or aside:

> Et voilà Belavoir sur le toit courant les gouttières. Quand je dis courant, c'est uniquement pour donner plus de vie à ma narration. (10)

Or again, after a description of the foppish governor of Melun, the Comte de Trancheville :

> ....il me semble entendre M. de Trancheville qui me crie au fond de sa tombe: « Merci, auteur! Merci ! » (11)

At times he seems to be slyly poking fun at his audience. Witness the terrible figure of the Spanish hidalgo, don Pedro Gaspantino de Rocca-Sinistra, who sleeps with his sword tied to his wrist and eats with it beside his plate. "Et quel sabre, grands dieux! Par sa largeur, sa

l'Union que *Belavoir* était d'une immoralité si révoltante qu'après avoir patienté quelque temps il n'y tenait plus et se désabonnait" (Strasbourg MS, N° 3519).

(9) The first of Gobineau's published works, a novelette entitled *Scaramouche,* is the story of a wandering troup of Italian players. In style (though not in bulk) it announces *Le Capitaine Fracasse.* In a framework of rapid adventure the author has satirized modern institutions. With a much slighter plot he has shown those qualities which we shall discuss in connection with his other early works.

(10) *Nicolas Belavoir,* 1852 ed., vol. III, p. 170.

(11) *Ibid.,* II, 240. Or the scene described in vol. IV, p. 92: "The stolen babe has dropped out of the story for a time. Finally Barbette recovers him and she goes to prepare his food. The writer adds:

"C'était la première fois que le déplorable enfant avait eu perspective d'avaler depuis le jour où le bras furieux de Nicolas l'avait arraché de son berceau dans la maison de Maître Guillaume Gorgebut, sise à Melun!!! Qu'elle lui soit légère! De quoi s'était-il donc nourri depuis tant de semaines? Il y aurait un livre à faire là-dessus".

pesanteur, il était horrible à voir." (12) So the author, who detested melodrama, launches exuberantly into the exaggeration of his characters. The haughty Spanish lady is the acme of cold disdain ; the lost Nicolas is discovered not by a single telltale blemish but by a whole body full of them. (13)

The obtrusion of the author is not the only amusing element in the book. There are pages where the author seems to have drawn on the purest sources of humour. The governor of Melun, whose chief thought is his pomades, his ribbons and his amorous conquests, furnishes several of these scenes. The one in which the bourgeois announces to he governor the abduction of his son and gets no satisfaction except a counterplaint on the non-arrival of the count's silk stockings, has a flavour of high comedy. And the scene in which the governor hears the complaints of the villain Chanterlaude on the disappearance of his niece and nephew, of the bourgeois Brillache on the theft of his hat and cloak, of Gorgebut on the loss of his child, and confuses all these disturbing complaints, is a clever example of that incongruity which finds its striking prototype in French literature in the trial scene of *Patelin*.

This good-natured, keen humour is mingled with scenes of intense realism. The opening pages of the novel show the wandering tumbler starved and half-frozen in the streets of Melun, escaping from which he finds an almost equally cold reception at the house of the rich burgher Gorgebut, who is that night celebrating the birth of his son. The picture of the misery of cold and hunger, in its vividness and terrible realism, takes us back to the *Testaments* of François Villon. The same realism marks the account of the murder of the duc de Guise (14) and of the innocent citizen Fulgentius (15), in the one case dominated by the cold cruelty of political assassination and in the other by the unreasoning, furious cruelty of the mob.

Beyond the scene of the murder of the duc de Guise, just referred to, and a brief picture of Catherine de Medici and Henri III, the historical element enters little into the composition of the story of *Nicolas Belavoir*. We find it more prominent in the other romance of adventure, *Le Prisonnier Chanceux*, written about the same time.

This is the story of Jean de la Tour-Miracle, the son of a Catholic

(12) *Ibid.*, III, 170.
(13) *Ibid.*, II, 240.
(14) *Les Aventures de Nicolas Belavoir*, 1852 ed., vol. II, pp. 204-5.
(15) *Ibid.*, III, 288.

nobleman and the godson of Diane de Poitiers. Jean is in love with a young girl, the baseness of whose origin precludes any possibility of parental consent to the marriage. The hero is drawn, in spite of himself, into the quarrels of the Wars of Religion, and he is entrusted by Brantôme with a costly necklace for his godmother, a charge which brings him into danger later. He then arrives at the chateau of Anet but is forced to escape to save his godmother from embarrassment, when he is accused of the murder of the Duc de Guise. Finally, by a series of happy circumstances possible only in a story of this kind, he escapes the vengeance of the Guises, the opposition to his marriage is removed and he weds the lady of his choice. The author adds complications to the story by introducing the beautiful but unscrupulous Corisande de Peyrecave, who troubles the young hero's affections for a time but is finally relegated, after a period of despair in a convent, to the safe protection of an ex-Protestant cavalier.

History intrudes in the work in the description of the court of Diane de Poitiers at Anet. Gobineau idealizes Diane. The exiled favourite appears in a golden mist of glory. "Son nom n'était jamais cité sans un déluge d'épithètes louangeuses." (16) The author describes this little court, with its group of ardent but ineffectual courtiers, their petty amusements, their political cabals and their intense devotion. In the centre of this group reigns the calm Diana, in whose entourage appears the Renaissance love of beauty and sensuous enjoyment, refined by the chaste beauty of the queen. Gobineau has made use of gifts and methods that, we shall notice, have resulted in the production of an illusion of historic reality, not by the display of a well documented erudition, but by a re-creation of a period (grouped around a certain character or chain of events), with such a power of reality as to put the reader closely in touch with the spirit of the time.

Another characteristic which appears in these early works is the obvious delight the author takes in his characters. The centre of interest of *Le Prisonnier Chanceux* is the valet Barbillon, just as the chief character of *Nicolas Belavoir* is the tumbler-servant whose name gives the title to the story. The latter is the child of an unfortunate

(16) "Elle (Diane) avait semblé plutôt calme que réjouie; plutôt heureuse qu'amusée; c'était une nature olympienne et on eût dit que, mystérieuse comme Isis, elle gardait encore, pour elle, en prodiguant la joie, des plaisirs trop purs et trop grands pour la faiblesse des mortels dont elle était entourée" (*Le Prisonnier Chanceux*, 1923 ed., p. 313).

union and is abandoned by both father and mother, to be raised by a group of travelling entertainers. The story deals with his relations with the young nobleman whose servant he becomes, the finding of his father in the person of Catherine de Medici's court fool, and of his mother, whom good fortune had made the wife of a prosperous innkeeper. The dangers and temptations of a hard life, however, had not spoiled Nicolas. With his stomach empty and his feet without shoes, his soul still dwells in the regions of a high and difficult morality. He gravely lectures his young master on the evils of swearing and adjures him to release himself from the sin of loving the pretty wife of the middle-aged bourgeois Gorgebut. After a touch of life at court as the son of the jester, he sorrowfully turns his back on the falseness and corruption of the palace and takes to the road again. At the end of the story, Gobineau, with characteristic realism, makes him die in a ditch. The author is evidently delighted with his "sententieux sauteur," as he leads him from the first terrible scene at Melun to his last and fatal experience of cold and hunger. (17)

Barbillon, on the other hand, is the Panurge-Figaro type of servant immortalized by Rabelais and Beaumarchais, with a little of the Gil Bas proclivity for picaresque adventure. Entirely without scruple, coming constantly in imminent danger of the gallows (through his acts, as Nicolas comes in danger of disaster through his misfortunes), skillful in all the tricks and subterfuges necessary in performing the multitudinous duties of a valet to a soldier of fortune, of unfailing resourcefulness in an emergency (in which characteristic he approaches the more conscientious Nicolas) and of a faithfulness which stands in curious contrast to his constant willingness to cheat his master in money matters, Barbillon stands out with a freshness and force that make him the most attractive as well as the most original character in the story. (18)

Nicolas Belavoir is worthy of notice for the author's skill in presenting the comic situation. Sometimes the comedy takes the form of the slapstick type of humour, such as the scene describing the

(17) "Non, jeune homme", poursuivit gravement Belavoir, "je n'étais pas déguisé. Malheur à celui qui rougit de son état. Je suis officier aujourd'hui, je ne veux pas le nier, mais pourquoi? C'est que le ciel m'a donné des vertus qui m'élèvent toujours plus haut que ma naissance et que ma destinée" (*Ibid*, IV, 29). And he takes the opportunity of preaching duty to Barbette, the wife of Gorgebut who forsakes her husband: "Il étouffait, il se boursouflait, il se prélassait; l'excellent Nicolas était insupportable." (*Ibid*, IV, 53.)

domestic difficulties of the burgher Brillache and his young wife, in *Nicolas Belavoir*. (19) At times it takes a broader, deeper form. There is one scene in *Le Prisonnier Chanceux* that is alone sufficient to establish the claim of the author to the title of humourist: Barbillon has arranged a great fête whereby his master shall dispose of the money won from his captors at the gaming table, and, with characteristic exuberance, he has gone far beyond his pecuniary resources. The time comes to pay. Barbillon receives the merchants of the town and acknowledges the justice of the bills presented. Unknown to his master, he gives them orders to draw an imaginary sum in the hands of several officers, acquaintances of his master, to be paid on the morrow, and he solemnly assures them that, although his master will have departed, he, Barbillon, will be there to see that the sum is paid. Then he reports to Jean that the merchants have agreed to a deferment of the payment. His master leaves, satisfied, and the zealous lackey offsets this useful though questionable action by secretly selling his master's wardrobe before escaping. It is such incidents as this, scattered through these early works, which furnish their most unique quality. Gobineau had studied in the school of the best French humourists and when he attempts to describe a comic situation he lives up to the best tradition of the *esprit gaulois*.

Along with this gift of humour he shows a capacity for realistic description. The opening scene of *Nicolas Belavoir* is typical of several such passages, in these early novels. The effect of terror inspired by cold and the fear of starvation is heightened by contrast with the cheerful warmth of the burgher Gorgebut's house. In describing the scene Gobineau uses the language of realism at its best, terse, colourful and accurate. In later years the author of

(18) In the character of Barbillon Gobineau has described at length a character of whom a poet of the same period has drawn the portrait in a few lines. One is instinctively reminded of Marot's description of his servant:

> J'avais un jour un vallet de Gascongne,
> Gourmand, ivrongne et asseuré menteur,
> Pipeur, larron, jureur, blasphémateur,
> Sentant le hart de cent pas à la ronde,
> Au demourant, le meilleur fils du monde.
> (Epîtres, XXIX. *Au Roy, pour avoir esté dérobé.*)

The similarity between the two characters is so close as to suggest a direct borrowing.

(19) The scene ends in a characteristically farcical note. M^me^ Brillache instructs her servant. "Si Brillache se permet quelque observation malsonnante, vous la noterez dans votre mémoire afin qu'à mon retour je la lui fasse payer." (Op. cit., III, 61.)

Nicolas Belavoir lost his sense of the comic, his humour becoming envenomed, but the gift which inspired him to write the realistic passages of his first novels, the gift of accurate observation and imaginative interpretation, remained with him to the last.

At the time when Gobineau was writing his early novels Alexandre Dumas père had already made for himself a reputation as master of the novel of adventure. *Les Trois Mousquetaires* appeared in 1844 and *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* almost immediately afterwards. Gobineau follows closely the model of the great popular novelist. He attempts, though not always successfully, that combination of rapid and interesting action which places Dumas without a peer among the writers of his class. Like the latter writer, too, he uses the historical personage and the historical motif to add piquancy to the story.

Still more than from Dumas, however, Gobineau derives his inspiration from *Gil Bas* and the creators of the picaresque novel. *Scaramouche* is, *in parvo,* a second *Capitaine Fracasse.* Indeed the similarity between the two works is so striking that it would seem as if Gautier had read Gobineau's novelette when it appeared in *l'Unité,* in 1844. *Le Prisonnier Chanceux* has many touches of the picaresque and *Nicolas Belavoir* contains all the elements of the genre.

Two other elements appear, however, which cannot be traced either to the Dumas type novel or to the novel of roguery. These are: an interest in the individual as a representative of his class and a tendancy to philosophize upon the historical fact. These two factors become part of almost all Gobineau's subsequent work and, in this way, *Le Prisonnier Chanceux* and *Nicolas Belavoir,* slender as they are in point of literary pretentions, announce *La Renaissance* and *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale.*

⁂

In the novels just described we catch a glimpse of Gobineau's interest in history. In *l'Abbaye de Typhaines* this interest appears in the form of a full-fledged historical novel. The book deals with the rise of the communes in the twelfth century. The subject of the enfranchisement of the cities during the Middle Ages had been made popular in France chiefly through the work of Augustin Thierry. In 1820 he had published in the *Courrier Français* a series of letters in

which he discussed the rise of the communes, (20) and he took up the subject again in the introduction to his *Récits des Temps Mérovingiens*. (21) For the plot of his novel Gobineau uses material he found in the *Lettres,* where Thierry in his colourful prose had already made dramatic the story of the commune of Vézelay. (22)

The story tells of the return of the crusader Philippe de Cornhaut from the Holy Land and of his discovery that, in his absence, his father, in a fit of impetuous piety and remorse for the unintentional killing of a priest, had given his patrimony to the Church. Philippe's anger on hearing this news is broken in upon by the revolt of the village dependent on the Abbey of Typhaines and the attack on the Abbey by the mob, led by the bourgeois Simon. Subordinating his anger to his sense of duty Philippe defends the abbey bravely until it is taken by treachery from within. The knight falls a prisoner into the hands of Simon, who has private reasons for seeking revenge. Philippe's fiancée, Mahaut Cornhouiller, is prevented by her overlord, the Duke of Nevers (who for some time has cast covetous eyes on the rich abbey lands), from coming to his rescue. Nevers sends the renegade knights Baudouin de Pornes and Anseau de Loysel to assist

(20) Published later as *Lettres sur l'Histoire de France pour servir à l'étude de cette histoire* (1827).

(21) Paris, 1840. He deals with the same subject more fully later in his *Essai sur l'histoire de la formation et des progrès du Tiers Etat* (1853). The emphasis on the importance of the Communes movement was one of Thierry's chief contributions to the study of history. Thierry pointed out the similarity of the movement to the revolution of 1789. He says:

"Il y a là (dans l'histoire municipale du moyen âge) en petit, sous mille aspects divers, des exemples de ce qui nous arrive en grand depuis un demi-siècle, de ce qui nous arrivera dans la carrière où nous sommes lancés désormais! Toutes les traditions de notre régime administratif sont nées dans les villes. Elles y ont existé longtemps avant de passer dans l'Etat" (*Récits,* chap. VI, Œuvres, ed. Garnier, I, 280).

Gobineau discusses the continuity of these traditions of the tiers état, and in the novel he upholds the same theory of similarity. Simon, summoning his fellow citizens to revolt, utters sentiments that would well suit the oratory of the XIXth century evolutionist, but which sound scarcely true in the mouth of a mediaeval bourgeois:

"Lorsque nous leur disons que nos parents, dans l'ancien temps, étaient aussi libres qu'eux-mêmes, ils n'y contredisent point et ne pourraient le faire; et pourtant ils ne laissent pas que de nous accabler sous les plus affreuses, les plus intolérables exactions" (p. 50).

This appeal to the ancient liberties has in it very little of the sentiment of the Middle Ages, but the author uses it to link the rise of the communes with the modern revolutionary movement, as Thierry had done, implying a continuous tradition of popular rights.

(22) The author has followed very closely the story of the commune of Vézelay (told by Thierry in Lettres XXII and XXIII) in his description of the commune of Typhaines.

the townspeople, who petition the king to recognize the commune. Philippe escapes death through the intervention of the monk Norbert and the assistance of Simon's daughter Damerones, who is in love with the young knight. The abbey is finally recovered through the efforts of bishop William of Champeaux and a Council of the Church (which threatens Nevers with excommunication), and the commune is suppressed. The fate of the hero is determined by the jealousy of Mahaut for Damerones. The hot tempered châtelaine, failing in an attempt to murder her supposed rival, dismisses Philippe and is finally forced into marriage with the villain, Baudouin de Pornes, while Damerones seeks solace in a convent and Philippe ends his days fighting for the Cross in the Near East.

Around these events Gobineau has built his work. To what extent does he follow the tradition of the French historical novel and with what success ? In 1847, when the *Abbaye de Typhaines* was written, the influence of Scott in France had passed its zenith. It is evident, however, that Gobineau goes back to this chief source for inspiration. He knew his Scott well. He was a boy of the impressionable age when the furore for the Scottish novelist's works was at its height in France, and in his last years we find him still going back for mental recreation to the works of Balzac and to those of the wizard of the North. (23)

The similarity with the works of Scott is striking. Gobineau has borrowed the descriptions of the forest glade that is to be found so frequently in the English novel. The opening pages of the story place us in surroundings which undoubtedly owe their inspiration to the opening description of *Ivanhoe* or to that scene in *Quentin Durward* where the young Scottish adventurer is led by the disguised Louis to the inn near Plessis-les-Tours. (24) The scene where Damerones meets Rigauld the forester, and is taken by him to be the sprite of spring, presents that combination of peasant credulity with a faint touch of the supernatural that Scott makes use of on several occasions.

Rigauld the rugged forester, as well as Foulques the sardonic squire of the young knight, have more than one counterpart in the Waverley novels. There are points of similarity too in the plot,—chiefly with the plot of *Ivanhoe*. The relations of Damerones and

(23) Kretzer, *Graf von Gobineau, sein Leben und sein Werk*, p. 55 (Leipzig, 1902).

Mahaut with Philippe are comparable to the relations of Rebecca and Rowena with the Saxon Wilfred (also, like Philippe, a returned wanderer), and if we find the fiery Frenchwoman less sympathetic than her Saxon sister, the figure of Simon's daughter is, at least, as real as that of Isaac's child. Furthermore the similarity of the attack on the Abbey defended by a single knight, and successful through treachery from within, to the attack on Front-de-Bœuf's castle, directed by a single knight and successful, also, through treachery from within, is obvious to the most casual reader. (25)

(24) The extent to which Gobineau relied on Scott may be seen in the following comparison :

Gobineau

C'était une immense *clairière*: le chaud soleil du mois d'août y dardait librement ses rayons, et sur ses bords, les chênes, les châtaigniers, les bouleaux de la forêt, presque tous *géants centenaires,* laissaient monter librement dans les rameaux emmêlés et touffus les épaisses volutes de mille plantes grimpantes...

Dans cette solitude *majestueuse,* un seul bruit s'entendait, c'était la voix argentine d'un *ruisselet clair* comme le plus limpide cristal. La source de cette onde charmante était là au sommet de la vaste pelouse, au pied d'un monticule; de rudes ouvriers, disparus depuis bien des siècles, avaient abrité ce bassin sous trois pierres *brutes* et de haute taille, dont deux faisaient mur, la troisième toit; précaution rustique mais respectueuse. Parmi les enfants des hommes, la fille de la forêt avait donc eu ses amis? Oui, des amis, et mieux encore, des adorateurs craintifs: on le devine assez, à la précaution que le clergé du pays a prise de poser au sommet cette pierre grossièrement taillée qui est censée représenter le saint évêque Procule, convertisseur de la contrée. (*L'Abbaye de Typhaines, p.* 1).

Scott

While he was thus reflecting, they came to a *glade* where the *large forest trees* were more widely separated from each other...

The trees of this secluded spot were chiefly beeches and elms of *huge magnitude,* which rose like great hills of leaves into the air.

Amidst these *magnificent sons* of *the earth* there peeped out in the most open spot of the glade, a lowly chapel, *near which trickled a small rivulet. Its architecture was of the rudest and most simple kind.* In a small niche above the arched doorway was a stone image of Saint Hubert, with the buglehorn round his neck and a leash of greyhounds at his feet (*Quentin Durward,* chap. I).

See also the opening pages of *Ivanhoe,* beginning «The sun was setting..."

There are interesting points of similarity in the characters of the two men, the lord of the castle of Trye and the Master of Abbottsford. The two writers met in their love of the Middle Ages. "In society," writes Andrew Lang, "Scott believed in gradation, like Doctor Johnson, and he believed in Duty. Both of these he found in the ideal of the feudal system. Here was a society which had an idea, an intellectual basis, such as no society has enjoyed since feudalism fell." (Intr. to the Andrew Lang ed. of *Quentin Durward,* p. 14.) These lines might with truth have been written of Gobineau. The pages of the Waverley novels are full of Scott's ideal of the English gentleman, a man

But if Gobineau has gone to Scott for a great deal of his inspiration, the *Abbaye de Typhaines* is by no means a slavish imitation of its prototype. Gobineau, in his appreciation of Scott as in all his literary tastes, was very far from the general Romantic point of view. In the hands of the Romantic writers the influence of Scott was chiefly manifested in the cult of a false mediaevalism or the search for local colour. De Vigny, in the first of the great historical novels of France, *Cinq-Mars,* had somewhat distorted his historical background by his aristocratic injustice to Richelieu and by the essentially Romantic dress in which he clothed his hero Cinq-Mars. Victor Hugo, in *Notre Dame de Paris* had allowed the great cathedral to assume the proportions of a symbol, with the result that the novel, in spite of the intentions of the author, became merely a *tour de force* of the imagination. Both writers suffered by a distortion of the historical perspective. Realism went to the other extreme and Flaubert in *Salammbô* so flooded his work with erudite and detailed documentation that the outline of the story is often lost in a mass of detail. Gobineau is free from the ponderous documentation of the Flaubert novel, but he shows, at the same time, a lack of that suggestive use of the technical word, the proper epithet with which Scott often reveals a class or a custom, and which the Romantic writers strove to copy.

Gobineau has attempted in the *Abbaye de Typhaines,* as he did in his later works, to give us a panorama of the society of the time. In *Ivanhoe* Scott limited himself to the narrow circle of Aethalston and Cedric, Brian de Boisguilbert and Front-de-Bœuf. Gobineau goes beyond the limits of Typhaines Abbey to give us glimpses of

continually under the influence of the cult of "noblesse oblige," which Gobineau preaches in *Amadis* and elsewhere. It must be admitted, of course, that Scott's essential aristocracy was much more broadminded, more liberal than that of Gobineau, and Scott was therefore able to create a variety of types and characters which Gobineau, through his ideas of decadence and contempt for democracy, was unable to do.

A recent writer has pointed out the inaccuracy of Maigron's theory (L. Maigron: *Le Roman Historique à l'époque romantique,* Paris, 1912) that the influence of Scott in France declined after 1830 (E. Partridge: *The French Romantics' Knowledge of English Literature*, Paris, 1924, p. 123). The novel we have discussed is interesting evidence that the influence of the Scotch novelist was still present in the middle of the century.

(25) A critic has also noted the similarity of the peasant Payen with the smith of the *Fair Maid of Perth* (Aldington: *The Revival of Gobineau,* London Times Lit. Sup., Oct. 12, 1922).

(26) Op. cit., ed. 1923, p. 284.

the court and pictures of the social and political problems of the period. (In this respect the novel has a greater resemblance to *Quentin Durward).* In order to do this more successfully he has made his characters representative of certain phases or classes of society. Philippe de Cornhaut represents knighthood, with its ideas of chivalry and its allegiance to the narrow codes of the feudal system; Pornes the recreant knight, the product of that internecine strife which was one of the results of feudalism; Mahaut, Gobineau's strongwilled, passionate woman of the North; William of Champeaux, the statesmanship of the Church; Norbert, the Church militant, the type of Peter the Hermit, who went about preaching and by their fiery zeal compelled admiration and even reverence and submission. The most carefully drawn figure in the book is that of the Abbot, who represents the Church in its rôle as the Vice-Regent of God, as the spiritual leader of men on earth. Strong in the conviction of the divine mission of the Church, the Abbot shows that mixture of haughty pride and lowly submission that is the peculiar attribute of the Christian Church through the Middle Ages. Proud of her splendour and her greatness he looks upon the preservation of her power as a sacred trust even when this means injustice to the dispossessed. He never loses his faith in her ultimate triumph, though turned out of his beloved Abbey, a refugee from the violence of the mob. "Ainsi vont constamment les affaires de l'Eglise," he proudly asserts as, with the tide turning in his favour, he prepares to make his triumphant entry into his Abbey.

> Ce sont des insensés et des téméraires qui s'attaquent à elle; car, en définitive, Dieu lui a promis un éternel triomphe.... (27)

This pride in the Church, however, is offset by a personal humility that shows itself in an austere, ascetic life, and the desire to forgive her erring sons. Whatever Gobineau's religious convictions may have been, his historic imagination led him to stand in reverent admiration before this, the greatest of the institutions of the Middle Ages, and this reverent admiration he has put into the figure of the saintly Abbot. It is noteworthy that the novel, with its variety of character, has no Prior of Jourvaulx. Gobineau has not spared the nobility. Philippe is a human character, not at all idealized except in his ending, and the other representatives of the noble class, Pornes, Loysel and Nevers, are types of mediaeval knighthood at its worst. But in spite of hints through the book regarding the

(27) P. 313.

dangers of the temporal elements in it, the Church is generally represented as a great and beneficent institution.

The other group of characters in the book, the *tiers état*, is treated with a sympathy that is striking when contrasted with Gobineau's later treatment of the "mob." In spite of scenes such as that towards the end of the novel where the commune, deprived of Nevers' support and threatened with excommunication, gives way to terror and the town becomes "un hôpital des fous,"—the problems of the people are treated justly and fairly. Simon, the moving spirit of the commune, who might easily have been the villain of the story, is described with a realism that makes him a well rounded character and even, on account of his energy and deep passions, endows him with almost epic qualities. Brought face to face with the classic dilemma of a choice between revenge on Philippe and love for his daughter, his character grows till it assumes a certain nobility that even his death, the result of his inextinguishable hate, does not efface. Payen, another of the bourgeois characters, is endowed with noble traits which the author was accustomed, at any rate later, to admit only in the élite, and he is given an epic death, being allowed to play the Oliver to Philippe's Roland. The cowardice, the cruelty, the weakness and lack of idealism of the common people are portrayed in several scenes, but the author has also shown the hardships of the unchartered town and the legitimate nature of its aspirations. In the background are the really historical figures and, in a series of vivid scenes, the reader is transported from the Abbey to the Court of Louis le Gros, where we see the problems of the kingdom, the pacification policy of the minister Suger, the turbulence of the barons and the situation of the clergy. (28) The weakness of the novel lies in the plot. Having assembled his characters, the author seems not to know what to do with them. Simon, as he should, dies unrepentant and his daughter Damerones ends her days in a convent, a solution not at all uncommon in those days. But, on the other hand, Mahaut, by some extraordinary combination of events, is forced to marry the villain, and for the hero Gobineau borrows several scenes from the *Chanson de Roland,* Philippe and Payen dying after the manner of the rearguard at Roncevaux. (29)

(28) Chapters XVIII and XIX.

(29) Schemann (*Biog.* I, 330) compares Philippe's last words: "Nous ne

The question of the ending in Gobineau's stories is a significant one. He is not averse to happy ending. Indeed, he uses it on several occasions. Nevertheless, he seems to be generally dominated by a desire to add an element of surprise. This is certainly true in the *Abbaye*. It shows itself in the fate of the jester in *Nicolas Belavoir* and even in the later works (30), *Les Pléiades* and some of the short stories. It is an essential element in his technique.

Ternove, which appeared at the same time as the novels of adventure, belongs definitely to no particular genre. It is a work of two parts, an historical part and a love story, both being badly joined together. The historical part is probably largely biographical, the result of long conversations with the author's father, Arthur Louis Gobineau, who himself took part in the events described: the Hundred Days and the emigration to Ghent. This part of the work is by far the more interesting. The author has described in graphic terms the retreat of the Bourbons, the vacillation of the leaders, the desertion of the officers, the psychology, in short, of fear and flight. Later on he used the same motif in *La Guerre des Turcomans*, the description of war by means of a series of small events, of vivid pictures, set in a framework of rapid action, of indecision, and of a kind of vacillation of fortune that is, indeed, a much more realistic description of most battles than a description of charges or of military manœuvres. Stendhal in *La Chartreuse de Parme* had a few years previously given a classic model for this type of narration and Gobineau undoubtedly owes not a little to that work. The scene gave the author an excellent opportunity for the use of that irony we have already noticed, in his presentation of the cowardice or weakness of the two parties. The old soldiers of Napoleon, "les yeux troublés par leurs hésitations intérieures," mistake a row of dung hills for the cuirassiers of the enemy. In the confusion a group of Bonapartist troops meets a superior force of the duc de Berry :

> ...et Octave ne put s'empêcher de sourire, ainsi que bien d'autres, en entendant partir de leurs rangs les cris de : Vive l'empereur! Vive le roi ! Vive Mgr le duc de Berry !
>
> — Ces gaillards-là, se dit Ternove, ont le génie de la politique. (31)

deviserons jamais de cette journée-ci avec les dames" with the words of the Count of Soissons quoted by Joinville (*Hist. de St Louis,* chap. 49...) "nous en parlerons encore, vous et moi, de cette journée dans les chambres des dames."

(30) As, for example, the ending of the Conrad-Tonska plot in *Les Pléiades,* or the ending of the "Danseuse de Shamakha" (*Nouvelles Asiatiques*).

(31) *Ternove,* 1919 ed., p. 117.

The description of the Hundred Days breaks abruptly into the love story, which is of an extremely banal character.

Ternove, the son of a noble murdered during the Revolution, is raised by his uncle, a weak and ignoble character, at the home of a dependent of the family, a miller, who takes advantage of their misery by forcing the nobleman to marry his daughter. Ternove falls in love with Marguerite, the fruit of this mésalliance, but the marriage is forbidden by the brutal miller, and Ternove is turned out to seek his fortune. Coming to Paris, he makes the acquaintance of the marquis de Marvejols and his wife, ultra-aristocrats, who wish to adopt him. Ternove, knowing they would not accept the grand-daughter of a miller as daughter-in-law, is brought face to face with a choice between love and ambition. Marguerite, persuaded by Ternove's friends, suppresses her love and orders her lover to abandon her, but Ternove refuses, gives up his ambitions and marries her. In *Ternove,* for the first time, the influence of Stendhal appears in Gobineau's works. The hero is Stendhalian in his ambition and in his thirst for strong emotions. In his relations with Marguerite he longs for the "grande passion." He fears that his love may give way to "cet attachement tendre et doux, bonheur négatif, pis-aller misérable qui n'a jamais suffi aux âmes vives," but he solaces himself with the thought of another strong emotion: "la fierté de mon dévouement et la vue du bonheur que je lui donnerais." (32) His fears, however, are fully realized. Choosing the calm life of conjugal affection, he sacrifices his exaltations and emotions, which are his real life, and deteriorates into a kind of vegetation that deprives him of his own and of his wife's respect.

Ternove, however, is not a true Stendhalian hero. He suppresses his egotism for his love and in so doing shows a delicacy of sentiment that, though it is only a pale reflection of the self-abnegation of Marguerite, has the merits of being unselfish. In the character of Julien de Soailles, we have a type of cold-blood ambition unrelieved even by the energy of the hero, a type that Balzac has immortalized in the person of Rastignac. In contrast to Julien is Octave's other friend and adviser Henri Marcel. In him a sceptical and worldly wisdom joins with a genuine disinterestedness. The other characters of the novel are Gérard de Ternove, Octave's uncle (an aristocratic black sheep whose weakness is

(32) P. 164.

pitilessly exposed by the author), and Bahurot the miller, whose brutal violence reminds us of Balzac's characters or of the creations of the Naturalistic school. The Baron de Marvejols and his wife serve as counterparts to Gérard and represent uncompromising aristocracy, brave, proud and unwilling to surrender.

The novel gives interesting evidence of the influence of another of the author's contemporaries, George Sand. Elsewhere Gobineau praises the charm of this writer's style and says that there is nothing "qui se compare à certaines descriptions, à des volumes entiers." These comments were made in 1845, two years before the appearance of *Ternove* and in the same year as the publication of *Le Meunier d'Angibault*. It is to the latter novel that *Ternove* shows several points of resemblance. In George Sand's book the miller is the hero of the story and not the villain, as he is in Gobineau's work. Bricolin, the villain of *le Meunier d'Angibault*, however, is obviously the inspiration for the character of Bathurot. Both are brutal, violent and at the same time miserly and cunning, a combination of qualities which brings misery to all around them. Bricolin forbids the marriage of his daughter and her lover and Bahurot compels Gérard de Ternove, the nobleman in distress, to form a mésalliance with his daughter, the mother of Marguerite, in both cases the result is hopeless misery. The incident of incendiarism in the George Sand novel, too, is reproduced by Gobineau. In *le Meunier d'Angibault* Bricolin's daughter, having become demented as a result of her unfortunate love affair, sets light to her father's house ; in *Ternove* Bahurot, frustrated in his evil scheming and rendered powerless by apoplexy, overturns a lamp and destroys both himself and his house. The two crimes take place in the same atmosphere of thwarted passion. There is also a certain resemblance between the tragedy of grand-père Bricolin and that of Gérard de Ternove, both of them existing, in a kind of living death, under the shadow of Revolutionary violence.

It is strange that a novel of such democratic tendencies as *le Meunier d'Angibault* should be used by such a hater of democracy as Gobineau. Obviously the influence is in style and plot and not in ideas. The nature of this literary debt furnishes an interesting commentary on the extent to which Gobineau, in this early period, was influenced by Romantic ideas and particularly the ideas of Romantic humanitarianism. The motif of the mésalliance appears in both books. In George Sand's work the characters move in a

rosy haze of idealism. The brutal elements are only incidents in a world where everyone is naturally good and where class distinctions are always subordinate to the warm impulses of noble hearts. The end of the novel is a Rousseauistic idyll. There is none of this in Gobineau's book. In *Ternove* the implacable hostility of the classes is shown in the figures of the Baron de Marvejols and his wife and when, at the end, the laws of class difference are infringed the author makes it clear that they are broken only with dire consequences. For Gobineau there is no happy ending to a mésalliance.

In this early work Gobineau, as we have seen, definitely limited himself to certain types. He drew his inspiration from the great masters of literature. As we read these works, we realize how well Gobineau knew the literary classics of his country: Villon, Pathelin, Rabelais, Marot, Brantôme, Le Sage, Beaumarchais, Molière, Dumas, and to what extent he was inoculated with the spirit guiding them. This ability to extract from a work the element that gives it vitality and truth shows itself later on in a different form when Gobineau came to examine the phenomena of foreign lands and races. It is this aptitude to recreate a situation or a mental mood that produced the *Trois Ans en Asie* and the *Nouvelles Asiatiques*. Yet these early works are more than mere pastiches. In borrowing Gobineau has always remained master of his form, and he has marked it with an originality that rescues it from the charge of imitation. This originality shows itself in three elements, which become dominant traits in his later works. These are: (1) a keen delight in the exposition and interpretation of historical facts, (2) a gift for describing rapid action, and (3) a humour, often kindly but generally ironic, which pervades and adds tone to his work. We shall see how these three characteristics become a permanent part of his literary equipment.

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The novels we have just discussed were the products of the author's youth, written under the stress of pecuniary embarrassment for a public who sought facile means of amusement. *Les Pléiades,* on the other hand, is the work of Gobineau's maturity and is the depository of his most cherished ideas.

The story deals chiefly with three men: Louis Laudon a Frenchman, Wilfred Nore an Englishman and Conrad Lanze a German, and their love affairs with Mme de Gennevilliers, the pretty, shallow

wife of a typical sucessful bourgeois, Harriet Coxe, the daughter of an indigent English missionary and the Countess Tonska, a Polish gentlewoman, respectively. The different parts of the book are related through the background, which represents a small German court of the nineteenth century, ruled over by a philosopher prince of democratic tendencies whose love affairs furnish minor episodes for the story. A certain unity has also been furnished by the philosophy of the three heroes, which the author has taken considerable pains to describe at the beginning of the novel.

The title *Les Pléiades* expresses the dominating idea behind the work. As we have already seen, Gobineau, in his later years, modified the theories of general decadence he had expounded in the Essay. In *Les Pléiades* he attempts to deal with the phenomenon of the individual aristocrat. (33) There are, he says, certain human "golden flowers", whom he calls "fils de roi". These appear at various times and in different places. In the novel he gives us a picture of three of these "fils de roi". They meet at the beginning of the book and, in the course of their conversation, discover their aristocratic kinship. (34) The purpose of the book seems to be to show how each of the members of the élite acts under the greatest of human motives, the love motive. So the novel might be called a treatise on the power and effect of love upon the cultured gentleman.

Wilfred falls in love with a girl of poor family, of no great personal charm, but of strong, unselfish character. He finally overcomes her fears of a mésalliance and his own dalliance with the charms of youth in the person of Liliane, and marries her. Conrad Lanze is seized with a violent passion for the Polish countess, who plays with his devotion and finally marries him as a refuge, apparently, against the exhaustion produced by the strife of her emotional desires. Louis Laudon develops an infatuation for the wife of the bourgeois Gennevilliers, becomes disgusted with her attempts to dominate him, wraps himself in a cloak of stoicism and thus disappears from the scene. In the background Jean-Théodore, the liberal prince, and Casimir Bullet the philosopher (another rejected

(33) Gobineau writes to his friend Prokesch-Osten (Aug. 7, 1872) that he is writing a novel having as its main thought "qu'il n'y a plus de classes, qu'il n'y a plus de peuples, mais seulement dans toute l'Europe quelques individualités, *surnageant comme des débris sur un déluge*" (Strasbourg MS. 3524).

(34) For a summary of this exposition see above, chapter entitled *Gobineau Aristocrat.*

lover of Countess Tonska) also serve to illustrate the power of love in the lives of the worthy.

The novel is chiefly remarkable for two things: its unusual form and the richness of its content. It is a characteristic of Gobineau's work that, once having chosen his genre, he seems to have ignored its rules or, at any rate, to have been lacking in any desire to attain to technical perfection. This is startlingly true of *Les Pléiades*. The novel has an affinity to the *roman à tiroirs*. The author handles the plots like a juggler juggling with a series of balls, setting them in motion one at a time and bringing them in no contact with each other except as they touch a common background, the hand of the juggler (which in the novel is the German court and, chiefly, its prince Jean-Théodore). So each story runs on side by side. The author drops one to take up another or to start a new one and gradually winds up each plot, the ending of the novel coming when all the characters are disposed of. (35) As usual Gobineau thrusts the reader straight into the middle of things and the first book is taken up largely with an account of the antecedent action. There is no main plot; there is no progress in the story as a whole and the relation between the characters outside their own group is an artificial one. The scene shifts at the author's pleasure, going from Italy to Bagdad, from there to Germany and back to Italy again. In short the novel is a series of short stories, loosely connected, and bound together by a desire on the part of the author to establish a general atmosphere and a spiritual affinity between the characters.

But if the form, from the standpoint of technique, is poor, the content is of remarkable richness. *Les Pléiades* is Gobineau's *Comédie Humaine*. Into it he has put all his powers of observation, all the accumulated wisdom of his fifty-six years of varied experience. The gems he has scattered through the work are of different kinds: gems of philosophy, of psychology, of satire, of biography, of eloquence, of lyricism. The story is often stopped while the author

(35) For example, the Wilfred-Harriet plot is developed in Book I, chap. 3 and 4, reappears in II, 3, 4, and 5, disappears until the last chapter of the third book and finally comes to a climax and ends in the first chapter of the fourth book. In the same way the Conrad-Tonska plot appears in I, 3 and 4; III, 1 and 7, and IV, 2 and 3. An entirely new plot, the love story of Jean-Théodore and Aurore, appears in III, 5, 6 and 7, and IV, 4 and 5. There are four plots of major importance—the Wilfred-Harriet story, the Conrad-Tonska story, the Laudon-Gennevilliers story and the Jean-Théodore-Aurore story. There are four minor plots—Jean-Théodore-Tonska, Liliane-Wilfred, Liliane-Schom, Bullet-Tonska.

indulges in a page of eloquent philosophy, as for example, this praise of moral beauty:

> Les sculpteurs grecs ont connu la Beauté. Ils l'ont vue émue quelquefois, mais par des passions simples comme elle....
> Mais nous, moins accomplis, moins élevés, nous occupons plus de points, nous voyons plus d'idées, nous savons davantage, et ce que nous devinons à demi s'étend infiniment plus loin. Ni les passions, ni les sentiments, ni les besoins, ni les instincts, ni les désirs, ni les craintes ne sont demeurés accroupis sur l'humble degré où la philosophie de Platon les trouva. Tout a monté, tout a multiplié. Ce peuple de génies ailés, qui nous mène, s'appelle désormais légion, et c'est lui qui, pétrissant les âmes, fait réfléter sur la face humaine des expressions, des significations que ni Praxitèle, ni Phidias n'avaient pu connaître. Ces maîtres n'auraient point regardé la physionomie d'Harriet si elle avait passé devant eux; pour ceux-ci, ce n'eût pas été la Beauté. C'est la Beauté pourtant, la Beauté d'une ère qui n'est pas celle de la joie mais de la vie doublée et redoublée — « un long cri d'espérance a traversé la terre ». Et cette expérience est celle d'échapper triomphalement aux étreintes du mal en s'enfermant dans les murs solidement construits d'une volonté dominatrice. (36)

Sometimes a page of irony arrests the progress of the story, as for example the following satire on that favourite subject of Gobineau, the mediocrity of the bourgeoisie:

> Henri de Gennevilliers, l'ami intime et le mentor de Laudon, était d'un caractère fort honorable. Il appartenait au parti conservateur; en outre, il était libéral et attachait une importance extrême, comme tous les gens sages, à pouvoir dire à chaque contradicteur avec un sourire attirant : « Nous sommes moins loin l'un de l'autre que vous ne semblez le croire!...» (37)

The conversation of his characters, while a little stilted when the author has placed upon it too much of the burden of his own thought, is on the whole lively and significant. It has, however, this peculiarity: it gives the impression that the author is constantly behind his characters, guiding and controlling their acts. This element gives to the style a personal character in which dramatic action is nearly always sacrificed to the ideological element which is the most important one in the book. At times this gives rise to startling incongruities:

> Coxe [the Bible Society agent at Bagdad] se murmura à lui-même le titre d'une ancienne comédie espagnole : « Une femme est un diable », et il resta pensif.... (38)

The idea of the unimaginative, pious missionary, under the stress of a deeply emotional situation, evoking the memory of

(36) *Les Pléiades*, 1924 ed., I, 181.
(37) *Ibid.*, I, 217.
(38) II, 4, p. 155.

Spanish comedy, is at best open to serious criticism. It is clear that Gobineau and not Coxe is thinking.

The effect of this personal element injected into the work is probably felt more keenly in the characters. Just as the characters in Gobineau's historical novel *L'Abbaye de Typhaines* seem to represent social institutions of the time, so in *Les Pléiades* they often seem to represent moral or racial qualities. Thus Wilfred represents the domination of the will, that Honour which Gobineau found supreme in the Aryan of the North, as Harriet represents the nobility of character and elevated idealism of the Saxon woman. (39) Laudon represents French *bon sens* (40), Liliane incarnates unfolding womanhood, as Aurore represents womanhood at its flowering.

The effect of this is to endow the characters with plastic qualities, giving them the appearance of statues rather than of living creatures. There is a great deal of determinism in Gobineau's methods. In spite of his theories of individualism, his characters seldom seem to work out their own salvation as *individuals*. They seem to be under the dominance of certain traits, national traits for the greater part, which have predestined them to act in a certain way under certain circumstances. In fact, the very thesis of the book, enunciated in the opening chapters, is a kind of determinism in which *le milieu* and *le moment* of Taine's famous trilogy are subordinated to the first element, *la race*.

The character least open to this criticism is Countess Tonska. She shows all the complexity of real life in her combination of romanticism and intellectual keenness and yet, in the end, the author apparently does not know what to do with her and gives her an ending which is completely out of harmony with his picture of her. (41) This weakness is, of course, one of plot rather than of character. In the place of a plot we get a gallery of portraits and this in fact is what the work resolves itself into: a series of por-

(39) "C'est une fille saxonne, faite pour vaincre elle-même et les autres" (II, 3, p. 146).

(40) "J'ai eu cet idéal supérieur devant les yeux, et j'ai fait effort pour le réaliser autant qu'il est en moi, et je serais désolé de manquer la distinction d'à-propos, de tact, de mesure et dans l'acceptation la plus élevée du mot, de ce que nous appelons bons sens ; et ce sont là les qualités françaises par excellence" (I, 7, p. 84).

(41) The incongruity of this ending is well expressed by Lord Lytton in a letter to the author (April 27, 1874) in which he says: "J'ai connu trois Princesses Tonska, mais aucune d'elles n'a fini s' bien." (Strasbourg MS. 3527.)

traits of people connected by the slenderest threads of plot. These portraits are made the more living by the author's use of every means at hand to develop and portray them. In addition to the ordinary means of description, the two elements dominating the author's procedure are the philosophical comment and the emotional description which we have already mentioned. The author felt the emotional power of the situation in which his characters found themselves. Sometimes he shows it in a passage of vivid description. Of Harriet he says:

> Elle avait été une exilée, une ménagère surchargée, une maîtresse d'école anxieuse. Combien l'amour lui était nécessaire! Comme il l'eût relevée, consolée, guérie ! Elle l'avait brisé sous les doigts de la raison et de l'honneur. (42)

Sometimes the emotion is shown in conversation, (43) sometimes in the speeches of the persons themselves. (44) But whatever means the author uses to convey his thought, he is always guided by the desire to depict or to expound accurately and clearly. He writes soberly and carefully, applying his words, as a painter applies his colours, avoiding brilliant effects but omitting nothing which seems necessary for the exact shade of thought he wishes to express.

The dominating emotion in the work is, of course, Love. And here the author has been successful in expressing sentiment without sentimentality. The element which Gobineau exalted above others, the beauty of passion, enabled him to describe varying degrees of affection, even the most intense, without affectation. Under the stress of their emotions, his characters glow with real, living power. In *Les Pléiades* it is Love, and Love only, that furnishes the dramatic elements of the story.

Apart from his doctrine of social decadence, Gobineau was no builder of psychological theories or philosophical systems; least of all in the matter of love. He was not willing to dissect it as Stendhal had done, to divide it into hard and fast divisions. Yet like Henri Beyle, he recognized a certain variety of affections, a certain hierarchy varying not only according to the individual but also according to the circumstances.

Like Mérimée and Stendhal Gobineau linked love with energy. He recognized it as a powerful, elemental force, capable of swaying

(42) II, 3, p. 147.

(43) As in the conversation between Casimir and Tonska, III, 1, p. 218 ff; or that between Wilfred and Harriet, II, 5, p. 168 ff.

(44) As for example, the speech of Harriet, Book II, chap. 3, p. 144.

the lives and shaping the motives of the strongest of men. His friend Prokesch-Osten protested (45) against the predominance of the love motif in *Les Pléiades* and particularly against its power to dominate the masculine will and make it subservient to the whims of women. Gobineau defends himself thus:

> Vous rappelez-vous Philippe-Auguste, l'homme politique par excellence, compromettant, lui, son Etat et toute l'Europe pour Agnès de Miraine? Vous prononcez le mot de maladie; c'est parfaitement exact; un amour comme ceux-là est une maladie, une maladie terrible, telle que les Grecs étonnés l'appelaient sacrée et divine parce qu'elle était comme incompréhensible; *mais c'est la maladie des âmes fortes*, et la montrer chez les imbéciles, c'est ce que l'historien ne peut pas faire. Je l'ai donnée aux pléiades: ai-je tort ? (46)

Gobineau's best description of the love that ennobles is to be found in his short story *Les Amants de Kandahar*. This story, crammed as it is with action, with emotion and (what is essential in Gobineau's system) with the combination of these two, is one of the most attractive of Gobineau's works. The author described the devastating effects of love as he described them later in *Les Pléiades :*

> Il [the hero] rentra chez lui, pâle, malade: sa mère s'en aperçut. Elle le prit dans ses bras; il appuya sa tête sur ses genoux et resta une partie de la nuit sans dormir, sans parler. La fièvre le rongeait. Le lendemain, il était tout à fait mal, et demeura étendu sur son lit. A la faiblesse étrange qui l'envahissait, détendait ses membres, il lui sembla que sa fin était proche, et il en était content. (47)

This is not the love of an impotent René but of a young man who subsequently proves by his virile actions his right to be called courageous. Apart from its tyranny Love is also synonymous with beauty. "La beauté est belle," says Gobineau in the same story, "la passion, l'amour absolu sont plus beaux et plus adorables. Jamais idole, si parfaite que l'ait imaginée ou faite l'ouvrier, n'approche en perfection d'un visage où l'affection dévouée répand cette inspiration toute céleste." (48)

He looked upon love as the great fact of existence, and as he grew older he came more and more to the idea that it was the one satisfying thing in life. (49) But love has different effects upon people according to their capacities. In his novels Gobineau has given us a variety of examples of the different effects of love: in Mahaut love overcome by pride and ending in disaster, in Laudon

(45) Letter of Oct. 1, 1872 (MS 3525).

(46) Letter of April 28, 1874, cited by Lange, p. 222. It is noteworthy that Gobineau's female characters are generally as virile as his men.

(47) *Nouvelles Asiatiques*, p. 266.

(48) *Ibid.*, p. 304.

love turning to ashes, in Ternove love overcoming ambition and ending in satiety. In Wilfred it is the servant of Duty. In Liliane it is the mysterious urge of unfolding womanhood and in Prince Théodore the satisfaction of middle age. It leads Casimir Bullet to stoicism and death and turns Conrad into a raging fire in which his talents and his reason are consumed.

For Gobineau love was dominated not by the emotions entirely, but by a certain spiritual force, an ardour which is not of the body but of the mind or of the soul. (50) In *Amadis* Oriane is the type of this love, which manifests itself in energy and idealism.

The Romantic writers seldom thought of love apart from passion. Zola and the naturalists reduced it to a bestial level. Gobineau gave it an ideational content, made it subservient at all times to the Will and portrayed it as an impulse to noble living. That it is difficult to live continually in the rare atmosphere of intense passion Gobineau plainly realized, but he saw in this fact not a reaction, not love turning to ashes, but an adjustment in which passion became the calm and tranquil peace of marital existence. The advantages of propinquity, the adaptability of human nature to adjust itself, the inception of love in marriage have never been dealt with adequately in literature. It is not a dramatic or romantic subject. Gobineau, however, has not been afraid of the "happy ending." In his books, Harriet, Liliane, Aurore take this same road to happiness with the same success. There must be some adjustment, of course. Liliane, the wife of the stolid German officer Schorn, is not the Liliane who falls in love with Love:

(49) Prends, cherche, prends, rejette et recommence;
D'un grand ennui tu te sens consumer ;
Tout est faiblesse ou sottise ou démence
Et rien ne rend heureux hormis d'aimer!
(Lines written at Rio de Janeiro, May, 1869,
Strasbourg MS. N° 3534.)

"L'amour", he writes in one of his last letters, "est ce qu'il y a de meilleur au monde. Ensuite le travail. Ensuite il n'y a rien." (Cited by Dreyfus, op. cit., p. 334.)

Gobineau makes the young hero of *Les Amants de Kandahar* say: "Quand on aime, on ne fait qu'aimer. A travers tout, en dessus de tout, on aime, et cette trame d'or forme le fond invariable sur lequel se brodent toutes les pensées véritables. Ce qu'on dit en dehors n'est que du verbiage. On n'y tient pas, cela n'est pas de vous, et, si on s'y intéresse, c'est que, secrètement, cela tient à l'amour ou y revient. Hors de l'amour qu'y a-t-il? Que peut-il y avoir? Quelle joie, quels transports de s'y abandonner tout entier, sans rien réserver pour quoi que ce soit qui s'en éloigne... En dehors il n'y a rien que le néant et comme voile, par-dessus, le plus profond mépris" (P. 301).

(50) This theory is of course at heart aristocratic. Gobineau would seem to deny the capacity of loving to anyone but the élite.

Liliane est passionnée pour son mari et ses enfants. Elle a tout ce qu'il faut, et un seul danger menace cette nature si délicate et si vive. C'est l'excès du bien et de la sécurité; qu'elle s'endorme trop et la Liliane qu'on a connue dans ces pages disparaîtra peu à peu sous la ménagère épaisse, comme il arrive aux fées de se fondre dans le brouillard du marécage. Mais si elle continue comme elle est maintenant, pleine de dévouement pour celui qu'elle aime, l'esprit ouvert aux grandes choses, pouvant admirer et haïr, la petite femme de l'officier obscur restera une des Pléiades et il faut espérer qu'il en sera ainsi. (51)

But this adjustment is the mellowing of the noble character, its development into a more peaceful contentment. (52)

What, then, is the main thought of *Les Pléiades?* It is difficult to discover. The work is the product of a richly philosophical mind, speaking through a group of characters and expressing his ideas on a wide variety of subjects. As there is no unity of form, so there is probably no unity of philosophy. If we insist on finding one we can perhaps do no better than adopt, as A. Sorel has suggested, the words of one of his "fils de roi": (53)

L'honnête homme, l'homme qui se sent une âme, a plus que jamais le devoir impérieux de se replier sur lui-même et, ne pouvant sauver les autres, de travailler à s'améliorer. C'est essentiellement l'œuvre des temps comme le nôtre. (54)

It is a gospel of stoicism. Based upon disillusionment it attempts to avoid the misanthropy to which such a disillusionment almost inevitably tends. This was the philosophy of Gobineau's last years.

The ideological novel is a hybrid in literature. It starts with the same technical disadvantages as the *pièce à thèse* in the theatre. Its object is to express ideas and to do this it has to take many liberties with its form. In this type of novel the author's talents as a technician are often subordinated to his gifts as a psychologist. The merit of *Les Pléiades* lies in the fact that Gobineau has, with a degree of success not apparent perhaps in his other works, been

(51) IV, 3, p. 369.

(52) So in *Le Mouchoir Rouge*, Gérasime Delfini, having murdered his rival, settles down to a successful married life with the woman he loves. Gobineau would seem to show that passion, even in its most violent forms, and its direst consequences, has an uplifting influence which does not necessarily lead to disaster and may lead to happiness. In the last scene of the Jean Théodore-Aurore plot in *Les Pléiades*, the author has given us an idyll of married life. Barbey d'Aurevilly has accused the author of spoiling the unity of the work by trying to be at once "stoïque et bergère." The criticism is just if one recognizes any attempt whatever on the part of the author to bring an element of unity into the work.

(53) *Temps*, March 22, 1904.

(54) III, 4, p. 266.

able to combine two important elements of his work as a writer: a fertility and originality of ideas which give the novel its background, and a keen, lively poetic imagination, which gives it its artistic value.

Since the late eighties, when Bourget and Barrès became interested in the analytical novel, this type of fiction has grown rapidly in popularity and there has grown among some modern writers (of whom Marcel Proust is probably the most striking example) a tendency towards overlooking the necessity of form. Here Gobineau is in line with the modern novel. *Les Pléiades* in its form and content has an even greater appeal to-day than when it was written. The qualities we have discussed in the work should give it a worthy place in the history of the ideological novel.

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The lack of attention to form, which we have noted in *Les Pléiades*, while it might be possible in the novel, is a more serious thing in the short story. This particular genre is subjected to much stricter rules of art. It demands a concentration akin to that of the drama, a determined narrowing of the field of the action in order to produce the effect of artistic unity.

The standard of the French short story was set by Maupassant, who has made of the genre a short narrative in which plot and background are merged with remarkable conciseness and dramatic power. These stories have remained the model for most subsequent writers, but to this ideal Gobineau does not aspire. Of the dozen narratives he has written, all of them (with the possible exception of *Le Mouchoir Rouge* and *M^lle Irnois*) could have been compressed into a short story of the Maupassant or Daudet type. They appear, however, as longer short stories, as *nouvelles* rather than *contes*.

The three main elements of the short story are character, action and atmosphere or background. It is the perfect harmony of these three parts which produces such masterpieces as Maupassant's *La Parure* or Kipling's *The Man Who Would Be King*. In the short stories of Gobineau these elements seldom appear in perfect harmony. Generally the plot or action interest is subordinated to the character interest or the atmosphere interest. In the *Histoire de Gamber Ali* the action is subordinated to the other two. In *La Chasse au Caribou* and in *Adélaïde* as well as in *La Guerre des Turcomans*,

the action is simple in comparison to the length of the story. In *La Vie de Voyage* it is almost non-existent, the tale being not much more than a "travelogue" told around a young married couple. In *Le Mouchoir Rouge* the action is really a double one and in *La Guerre des Turcomans* it combines with picaresque elements, that type of rambling description of a battlefield which we have noted in *Ternove*. In *La Danseuse de Shamakha* the action is noteworthy for its anti-climax.

None of Gobineau's stories is more typical of the author than the tale last named. Beginning with a chance meeting between a young Spanish officier named Moreno (who is in the service of Russia) and a Russianized Lesghian named Assanoff in a little town on the Black Sea, the story moves to Shamakha in the southern Caucasus, where Assanof is attempting to buy for the marriage market in Turkey a well known dancer named Omm Djéhâne. The latter turns out to be the cousin of the Russianized Tartar. In a clandestine meeting she reminds him of the massacre of their tribe by the Russians, and tries to arouse in him feelings of vengeance. She offers to marry him if he will give up his Moscovite friends, return to his tribe and declare war on his adopted country. He goes back to his lodgings determined to do this, but when Omm Djéhâne comes to claim fulfilment of the promise, she finds that Moreno, assisted by the weak character of Assanoff, has defeated all her plans. Mad with rage she attempts to stab Moreno, but she is finally overcome by the evident sympathy of the Spanish officer, who is deeply affected by the tragic passion of the young Lesghian. When we meet the characters again, some time has elapsed. The dancer has been wasting away with a mysterious disease, and her cousin has taken her under his protection. Moreno encounters them on the street at the moment when the dancer has broken away from her protector in order to die on Moreno's doorstep, and the Spaniard arrives in time for her to pass away in his arms.

The plot of the story is poorly constructed. There is no main theme and the dancer's declaration of love at the end comes completely as a surprise.

What is chiefly evident in the story is the author's interest in the racial differences of his characters. Each as he appears is minutely described, even those who play only a minor role. M^me^ Marron the mistress of the inn at Poti, and Forough-el-Husneh ("La Splendeur de la Beauté"), the dancing mistress, are as carefully

drawn for us as is the Tartar Assanoff, or the central figure of the tale, Omm Djéhâne. In her combination of native charm and primitive passions the latter reminds us of Colomba, the heroine of Mérimée's story. The dancer of Shamakha is Gobineau's woman of the strong passions. The racial feud of which she is a victim brings out in her those forces of energy which make Mérimée's heroine attractive and which, indeed, compelled the admiration of the Spaniard. The apparent inconsistency of her ending, weak as it is from the standpoint of technique, is merely the transference of her energy from the passion of revenge to the passion of love. The story is long, but the descriptions of men and events are so well done that to suppress any part of it would be to detract from the charm of the tale. The scene between Assanoff and the Russian official, Grégoire Ivanitch, for example, unnecessary as it appears to the plot, is typically Gobinist in its flashes of irony and its keen insight into national psychology.

The *Danseuse de Shamakha* is a good example of Gobineau's stories because it shows his subordination of plot to character and background. This subordination is remarkable in all his Oriental tales, contained in the same volume. *L'Illustre Magicien* is the story of a young Persian scholar, Mirza Kassem, whose mind is drawn from his young wife to the mystic call of the unknown. He follows a dervish as far as Afghanistan, where the latter magically disappears and Kassem is rescued by his bride, who has followed him. The tale is a description of the mystic mind of the East, in which the love story is merely incidental. Equally unimportant is the love story in *La Guerre des Turcomans,* where the hero, Ghoulam Hussein, married to his pretty cousin Leila, goes through many misfortunes, chiefly as a soldier, and comes out of them to find that the fickle maiden has wed another and more prosperous cousin. The main part of the narrative is a description of Oriental military psychology in which there are several pages of striking realism. (55)

In only one of the six stories in this volume, *Les Amants de Kandahar,* is the plot interest predominant, and even here the action lacks that element of inevitability which is characteristic of a well constructed plot. The secret visit of Osman Beg to his brother's house in search of his daughter and the intervention of the Prince are examples of Gobineau's inability to smooth the rough places in

(55) For example, p. 225 ff. and p. 218.

his action, but in this tale the story runs more or less logically, without unnecessary interruptions, from beginning to climax, and it ends with the inevitable dénouement of the death of the lovers.

If in his early novels Gobineau shows most clearly the influence of Stendhal, in the short stories of his later life he evidently learned most from Prosper Mérimée. Gobineau was a friend of Mérimée, whose influence he sought when he wished to obtain a place in the Academy. He was a great admirer of Mérimée's stories. (56) This influence can be seen in several of his tales. *Les Amants de Kandahar,* for example, is written with the same stress on the nobility of strong passion that we find in *Colomba* and elsewhere. *Le Mouchoir Rouge* is, perhaps, the most striking example of the influence of Mérimée. The deaths of César Tsalla and of Count Lanza are described with an objectiveness that, in its cruelty, reminds one inevitably of *Mateo Falcone.* This cynical impassivity on the part of the author is retained until the last lines where Gérasime, having murdered the lover of his sweetheart's mother, marries the girl and — to quote the author — "lives happily and has many children."

The character of Omm Djéhâne immediately suggests Colomba. The danseuse of Shamakha is wilder and less restrained by convention than even the Corsican maiden, but she shares with the latter the complete conviction of the nobility of revenge and the willingness to go to any extreme in order to obtain it. There can be question as to the relative merits of the two tales. Mérimée uses the motive of revenge to produce a single effect, reserving the love plot for other characters. Gobineau permits his heroine to contract a violent passion for another (and a colourless) character, when she fails in her scheme for revenge. In this way he spoils the artistic unity of the story.

What Gobineau borrowed from Mérimée was his objective, emotionless style, combined with a predilection in favour of strong emotions in his characters.

Most of his short stories are taken from his personal experiences. *Akrivie Phrangopoulos* is the result of his visits to Naxos and the

(56) As early as 1844 we find him writing: "Il existe aujourd'hui un grand maître en fait de nouvelles; difficilement on ferait mieux que *Colomba* et *la Double Méprise;* leur auteur unit aux qualités que nous avons énumérées celle plus indispensable encore d'une grande originalité de style." (*Commerce,* n° 275, Oct. 1, 1844, Art. on Musset).

volcano of Santorin. (57) *Adélaïde* is the expansion of an anecdote related in the salon of one of his friends. *La Chasse au Caribou* reflects his experiences in Newfoundland and is the result of observations which he has recorded in his work *Voyage à Terre-Neuve*. (58) This is particulary true of the *Nouvelles Asiatiques*. Written in later life, they are the reminiscences of a man of advanced age. We can imagine that the writer obtained this incentive from a perusal of his old notes and papers, for we frequently find facts used which he has commented on in the *Trois Ans en Asie* and the *Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*.

The *Nouvelles Asiatiques* have a special interest to the modern reader in their obvious affinity to the work of that writer who today stands pre-eminent in this type of short story, Rudyard Kipling. The creator of Mulvaney has written chiefly about the foreigner in the Orient, a type of which Gobineau disapproved, but in one of his works, *Kim,* he has packed much of that psychological study and philosophy which was the peculiar source of interest to Gobineau. The little half-breed urchin who elects to follow Teshoo Lama in his search for the mystic River can surely claim kinship to Gamber-Alì of the *Nouvelles Asiatiques*. Both of them are consumed which a desire for new experiences. Of Gamber-Alì the author says : "Il éprouvait une envie folle de courir les aventures et de s'amuser à tout prix." (59) Like Kim he was the terror of the bazaars: "Il devint de bonne heure la terreur des épiciers et des marchands de comestibles, dont il savait à merveille détourner les dattes, les concombres et quelquefois même les brochettes de viande rôtie." (60) And when he was caught and punished, which happened occasionally, his mother would gather together her feminine cohorts and, indulging in that immemorial Oriental trick of the false accusation, they would assault the unfortunate shopkeeper with cries of "Musulmanes! on égorge nos enfants." (61) In the artistry of their lying, too,

(57) See Schemann (*Biog.*, II, 10 ff.) for an account of his visits to these places.

(58) See particularly the pages on the training of young women, pp. 294 ff. of *Voyage à Terre Neuve,* Paris, 1861.

(59) *Nouvelles Asiatiques,* p. 143.

(60) *Ibid.,* p. 140.

(61) *Ibid.,* p. 141. Cf. *Kim,* p. 22 (Scribner ed.): "Do not sit under that gun," said the policeman loftily.

"When didst thou steal the milkwoman's slippers, Dunnoo?

That was an utterly unfounded charge, sprung on the spur of the moment, but it silenced Dunnoo *who knew that Kim's yell could call up legions of bad bazaar boys if need arose.*"

these two Gavroche-Gil Blas types are brothers, as they boast of their achievements or their powers. (62) Kim goes off with his Lama to find the mystic River (just as Mirza Kassem, in the *Illustre Magicien,* follows his magician across Persia to Afghanistan) and Gamber-Alì, entering the service of a court *ferrash-bachi,* narrowly escapes death through a misadventure and finally becomes the husband of a lady of wealth.

And the women of *Kim:* the widow of the hill rajah whose obese good nature is mingled with an expertness in vulgar repartee; the woman of Shamlegh; the dancing girl at Lucknow, are made from the same mould as Furough-el-Husnet of the *Danseuse de Shamakha* and Bibi Djanem, the doting mother of Gamber-Alì, with their easy morals, their vanity and a certain feminine illogical energy. (63)

Kipling, like Gobineau, is fascinated by the psychology of the Oriental mind. Both writers are particularly interested in that part of the Oriental mind which is different from the Occidental : the haziness of Oriental ethics, the prevalence of lying, the love of power, the almost puerile indulgence in boasting, the efficacy of

(62) Compare the account by Gamber Ali of the fight in the tavern (p. 152-3) with Kim's assertiveness.

Kipling's character (as is the case with other child characters of his, Wee Willie Winkle, for example) is somewhat marred by his precocity, probably the result of the little half-breed's Irish blood. In giving Gamber Ali the typically Oriental trait of physical fear Gobineau has made him more real, and his boastfulness more ludicrous.

(63) Kipling, like Gobineau, dwells upon the ability of the Oriental in vituperation:

"Mme le Papillon", finding persuasion useless, tries to resort to force in order to get Gamber Alì from the temple where he is starving. The other women, who are gathered from curiosity to see the young man, begin to curse her: "Elle répondait injure pour injure et ne se montrait pas moins imaginative en ce genre que les assaillantes. On l'appelait vieille, elle appelait ses ennemies caduques; on suspectait la pureté de ses intentions: elle répliquait par les accusations les plus énormes. Dans ce colloque passionné entre personnes du sexe faible et timide on se prodigua des trésors d'injures, et il n'y a pas d'exagération à affirmer que les plus respectables et les plus érudites parmi les détaillantes de poissons, qui font un des principaux ornements de Paris et de Londres, eussent eu quelque chose à apprendre dans ce beau jour. Rien n'est châtié, mesuré et fleuri comme le langage d'un Oriental; mais une Orientale ne se pique que d'expliquer le plus énergiquement possible ce qu'il lui plaît de dire" (p. 186). It is illuminating to compare this passage with the conversation between the *chela* of Teshoo Lama and the attendants of the hill rajah's widow in *Kim,* Scribner ed., p. 109-10). — Gobineau is content with mere exposition. Kipling makes his characters act their part, and in emphasizing the *effect* rather than the fact produces a much more striking impression on the mind of the reader. Here Kipling is by far the greater artist. It is this failure in concentration which is the weakest spot in Gobineau's technique as a short story writer.

vituperation, the barely concealed contempt for Western efficiency, the disregard for time, the paradox of a certain kind of energy which exists in spite of seemingly hostile factors. (64)

But if the *Nouvelles Asiatiques* can be placed *in loco parentis* to *Kim,* the former work itself must claim literary descent from a work to which the author himself has paid tribute, namely *Hajji Baba of Ispahan.* (65) The atmosphere of this work dealing with an Oriental Gil Blas is apparent in the *Nouvelles.* It is seen chiefly in the *Histoire de Gamber-Ali,* where the chief situation in the story, the refuge sought by the terrified though innocent homicide in the mosque of the tomb of Abdoulazym, is probably suggested by Rajji's refuge in a sanctuary, described in chapter XLV of that work. It is probable too that Hajji's encounter with the Turcomans, described in chapter II, may have suggested some of the story told in *La Guerre des Turcomans.* It is in these two stories that Gobineau shows his interest in the Persian mind and customs, which are so humorously and keenly portrayed in Morier's book.

In these Oriental tales the elements of character and background have combined to furnish the predominating interest in the stories. In *Akrivie Phrangopoulos* Gobineau has succeeded in making a satisfactory combination of all three elements.

The English sailor Norton is forced to bring his ship for repairs into the harbour of Naxos, a small island of the Greek archipelago. There he is invited ashore by M. de Moncade and M. de Phrangopoulos, gentlemen living in the reflected glory of ancient consular relations with Europe. Naxos is almost completely cut off from contact with Europe and has retained the simplicity and classic beauty of ancient Greece. In several pages of colourful description Gobineau takes the opportunity of describing this beauty of land and water wedded to the beauty of tradition. To this natural and

(64) Shown in Kipling in his account of the pride and honour of the hillmen. In his poem *The Grave of the Hundred Dead,* as in his picture of the old ressaldar in *Kim,* we get a type of Honour which Gobineau has depicted in his Afghan story, *Les Amants de Kandahar.* The lyric note in the affection of the two young lovers in the latter story finds many echoes in Kipling's works (for example the native wife of the Englishman in *Without Benefit of Clergy*). For Kipling as for Gobineau there was romance in the relations of the two sexes in the Orient as in the Occident.

(65) *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan,* by James Morier, London, 1824. Gobineau in his introduction to the *Nouvelles Asiatiques* (p. 1) says: "Le livre le meilleur qui ait été écrit sur le tempérament d'une nation asiatique, c'est assurément le roman de Morier intitulé *Hadjy-Baba.* Il est bien entendu que les *Mille et une Nuits* ne sont pas en question: elles demeurent incomparables; c'est la vérité même: on ne les égalera jamais."

historic beauty he brings the physical beauty of Akrivie, a nineteenth century Nausicaa, ignorant of the civilization of her century but prevented from being a mere Rousseauistic child of nature by a native intelligence which needs only a touch of outside stimulation to awaken it to activity. This stimulation is provided by Henry Norton, who falls in love with her. The story tells how Norton, having shocked the proprieties of the maiden by proposing directly to her, makes a formal demand for her hand, which is acceded to by the gratified parents and how they are married, Norton giving up the sea and his own home and settling in lonely Naxos to a peaceful and happy married life.

The plot is simple: the meeting of the couple, their mutual attraction, the proposal and the marriage. The background, with its psychological and its traditional inferences, is the important thing. With a lyrical note the author describes the beauty of the landscape: the sea, "calme d'un calme profond, bleue comme une pervenche" over which the dawn arose and "le safran devint orange, le rose se parsema d'écarlate, des filons d'or coururent de toutes parts et une clarté éblouissante, chaude, dominatrice électrisa la nature entière." (66) In this setting moves Akrivie. The young Greek maiden becomes the symbol of her race:

> Akrivie était la femme des temps homériques, ne vivant, n'existant, n'ayant de raison d'être que par le milieu où elle se mouvait, fille, sœur exclusivement, en attendant qu'elle devînt, d'une manière non moins absolue, épouse et mère. (67)

To this harmony of setting and character Gobineau still brings a third element to make the fusion stronger. This is the sense of history in the landscape: "Tout le passé des îles se reflète d'une manière bien exacte dans le présent." It is not the Naxos of today but the Naxos of ancient Greece, still glowing with memories of Aeschylus, of Plato, of the Parthenon. Its soil is rich in archeological memories. Its blue stretches of sea and sky symbolize the classic spirit of beauty and simplicity. (68) So the physical element, the human

(66) *Souvenirs de Voyage*, 1922 ed., p. 66.

(67) *Ibid.*, p. 118. She has the same habits, customs, mode of living as the daughters of Priam:

"Les conditions d'existence réunies autour d'Akrivie étant exactement celles où se trouvaient les femmes d'il y a trois mille ans, isolement, affections limitées, ignorance absolue du monde extérieur, le résultat produit avait été pareil sur la fille de Naxos à ce qu'on avait pu le voir sur les tempéraments d'élite de ces temps reculés" (p. 117).

(68) *Ibid.*, p. 132.

element, meets a moral element to produce a single effect in the story.

In spite of long digressions, chiefly comments on the favourite Gobinist subject of race characteristics, *Akrivie Phrangopoulos* is perhaps the most original and the most typical as well as the most attractive of Gobineau's short stories.

In his tales, as in his novels, Gobineau emphasizes rather than avoids the expression of emotion in his characters. Here, as elsewhere, sentiment seldom deteriorates into sentimentality. There is always something lyrical in Gobineau's description of Oriental love. He shows that in the realm of the affections there is not a great deal of difference between the East and the West. The picture of mother love in *Gamber-Ali,* dominated though it is by the comic element, rings as true as any description of the love of a Western mother, and the lyrical element in the love of the two young Afghans is of the same quality as that of the young married couple in *La Vie de Voyage.*

The fusion of emotional power and psychological observation is found in *M^lle Irnois.* This tale is a product of the 1847 period and shows the marked influence of Balzac. Following a method characteristic of this writer (69), Gobineau presents a sordid situation and throws on to this background a spot of vivid light. This patch of light amid the physical and spiritual squalor is the soul of M^lle Irnois, the only daughter of a wealthy ex-speculator of the Revolutionary times. With a touch of Romantic antithesis that reminds us of Victor Hugo, he has placed this soul in a frail, misshapen shell of a body. M^lle Irnois, a woman in age, is still carried about like a child, and her mind is a blank, until one day she perceives in a room across the court the vital presence of the young, happy, carefree shoemaker. A parvenu Napoleonic noble, whose character is as the atmosphere of the Irnois household, assisted by the emperor, forces the father's consent to marriage with the daughter, in order to get the Irnois fortune. M^lle Irnois, whose only thought is of the young cobbler, believes she is to be given to him, and the disillusionment brings about a physical crisis that results, a few days after the marriage, in her death. Gobineau is dealing here not with ethnological psychology but with the pathology of an abnormal mind. The awakening of the sense life in the

(69) As for example, in *Père Goriot,* in *Eugénie Grandet,* etc.

misshapen body of the young girl is described with a kind of exaltation :

> Aux premiers jours de sa contemplation mystérieuse elle n'avait voulu confier son plaisir, toute petite qu'elle fût, à personne; aux jours de sa joie, de son ivresse, de son bonheur, le mystère fut commandé plus impérieusement encore par le vœu secret de son âme... Ce grand mystère, dont elle entourait sa passion, montre bien qu'il y entrait quelque chose des sens. L'âme a sa pudeur, sans doute; mais cette pudeur-là n'est chez les amoureux que le reflet des flammes qui brûlent ailleurs dans leur être. (70)

At the moment of the unexpected meeting with the young workman in her own house, this spiritual awakening gives her almost a physical beauty:

> Soudain on vit aussi s'animer ses grands yeux et je ne crains pas de dire qu'avec toutes les imperfections de sa personne, elle eut à ce moment une exquise beauté.... (71)

And when this spiritual exaltation is killed, the physical life is quenched also.

In *M*[lle] *Irnois* Gobineau shows himself interested in the life of the mind. In *Adélaïde* he has applied his curiosity to an actual situation, where the element of imagination, dominant in the former tale, gives way to the skill of the observer and the raconteur. (72) It is the story of a young Frenchman who has as his mistress for a number of years the wife of a German and who later becomes infatuated with her daughter. The two women, with the energy of Gobineau's Saxon women, but with the weapons of the nineteenth century, struggle for the affection of the man, who is placed in the unhappy position of having to choose between them. Finally nothing of a dramatic nature happens. Both the mother and daughter become disgusted at the pusillanimity of the victim and the fires of theire affection become extinguished. (73) The eloquence of *M*[lle] *Irnois* is entirely missing here and in its place we get the keen, satirical style of the eighteenth century, the

(70) *M*[lle] *Irnois*, 1924 ed., p. 146.

(71) *Ibid.*, p. 166.

(72) The story was based upon an incident in real life. It appears that Gobineau told the story in the salon of a friend and was requested by his delighted audience to put it into writing. He did so, repressing the real names of the persons involved.

(73) Gobineau has used the same situation, with entirely different results, in *Le Mouchoir Rouge*. Here the elderly lover gets rid of the young rival by assassination, then falls in love with the daughter of his former mistress and is in turn assassinated by the young girl's lover at her instigation.

language of the salons, relieved here and there with phrases of philosophical widsom.

⁂

One of the chief tests of a novelist is his ability to create characters which impose themselves on the imagination of the reader. Has Gobineau succeeded in doing this? In none of his works (with the possible exception of *M^lle Irnois*) has he taken the trouble to develop his characters and cause them to change under the exigencies of the situation in which they are placed. They generally give the impression of being static. They come ready made to his hand. This is true of Harriet Coxe as it is of Mahaut; it is true of Prince Jean Theodore as it is of Philippe the Crusader. In the earlier novels the genre dispensed with any necessity for such a development, of course, but in *Les Pléiades* its absence is a decided weakness.

Nevertheless, though the characters lack a certain element of vital growth, they are for the greater part living types. In looking over the list one is immediately impressed with the richness of its variety. This is particularly true regarding the women. In the variety of his pictures of women characters Gobineau is almost Shakespearean. He has no fixed type. Damerones, in the *Abbaye,* is as different in every way from the others as is Tonska, or Harriet, or the mischievous wife of Brillache in *Nicolas Belavoir.* The characteristic which alone serves to link them together is energy. Among all the various representatives of womanhood we look in vain for the "clinging vine" type. In his women Gobineau was true to his ideas and his predilections. The energy of Harriet is not the energy of Sophie Palazzi in *Le Mouchoir Rouge* or of Mahaut, the quick-tempered Saxon, but in all of them the roots are the same. In all of them their personality is dominated by a strong and indomitable will.

⁂

The novelistic work of Gobineau includes almost all types of fiction; the novel of adventure (*Nicolas Belavoir*), the picaresque story (*Scaramouche*), the historical novel (*l'Abbaye de Typhaines*), the psychological story (*M^lle Irnois*), the ideological novel (*Les Pléiades*) and the exotic tale (*Nouvelles Asiatiques*).

Opposed to this variety of type we find a unity of technique. All his stories show weakness of plot, a refusal to be bound down to the rules of fiction writing. They suffer in most cases from an exuberance of ideas. This sacrifice of form to content has less effect upon Gobineau's earlier works, since the feuilleton novel allowed a certain freedom of treatment. It is shown more clearly in the short stories and it appears most plainly as a defect in *Les Pléiades*.

The art of the writer appears chiefly in the skill with which he portrays his characters. They are for the most part living types, made vital by the characteristic of energy which dominates them all. The literary art of Gobineau is at its best when he is painting "portraits."

The ideological element in his fiction gradually increases in importance. In his early works it is very slight. In *Les Pléiades* it takes first place, completely submerging the plot. In his short stories, particularly in the *Nouvelles Asiatiques*, it assists in creating the background of the tale and producing a harmony between the characters and their environment.

In his novels and short stories, as in his other work, Gobineau is interested not in problems of morality or ethics, which he often purposely avoids, but in the social differences between individuals and peoples. In short, in his works of fiction he always remains the ideologist and the observer rather than the artist.

CHAPTER III

THE HISTORICAL AND ORIENTAL WORKS OF GOBINEAU

The bulk of Gobineau's work, whatever its form, lies within the realms of history and ethnology. We have already discussed some of these works of definite literary genres. It is now necessary to examine others of a more historical nature to determine the type of mind which dominated Gobineau as a writer, and to see what his final contribution was in this field.

Just as the eighteenth century philosophers endeavoured to enlarge their point of view and find a wider scope for their theories by including the East within the range of their observation, so Renan in the nineteenth century turned to the East when he was examining the question of the history of religions. Gobineau followed the trend of his time in assuming that historical study was incomplete if it omitted the East from its range. With his life-long predilection for Oriental things, it was natural that he should do this, and it is not surprising to find his historical theories linked with his ideas regarding the Orient. Indeed, it is impossible to separate Gobineau the historian from Gobineau the Oriental exoticist.

In Gobineau's historical system there seem to be two main elements that dominated all he wrote. These elements are his insistence on the importance of great men in the determination of

the fate of a people or nation and his peculiar attitude towards the historical fact, which caused him to go beyond the mere mathematical accumulation of data and subject himself to a kind of impressionism or even mysticism.

His theory of the importance of the superman in history is a natural corollary of his inherent aristocracy. As a theory it stands in direct antithesis to the dictum of Michelet: "L'humanité est divine, mais il n'y a pas d'homme divin." (1) It rather coincides with Carlyle's ideas concerning the Hero-Leader and his prominent place in history. (2) One of his grievances against democracy is its constant attempt to belittle the achievements of its leaders. (3) For him, as for Thomas Carlyle, the history of a people is the sum of the stories of its great leaders. This is, in part, the thesis of the *Histoire des Perses*. The Iranian kingdom is the land of Abtyn, of Ferydoun, of Cyrus, of Darius and of Artaxerxes. The history of its decadence is in part the history of Alexander. "Faire l'histoire de Jésus, de Saint-Paul, de Saint-Jean, c'est faire l'histoire des origines du christianisme", Renan had written in 1863, and in this belief Gobineau followed his great contemporary. There seems at first sight an incongruity between this individualistic conception of history and the ethnic theories of Gobineau, but the paradox is more imaginary than real. The race is always present, changing in its composition through intermixture of blood, but it is merely the background against which stand out the brilliant figures of the "fils de roi". History, then, is subject to two modifications: the constant flux of ethnic mixture and the shaping influence of great leaders. The theory of the importance of the great leader finds a slight modification in the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl*. "J'en tire la conclusion", the author says, "que si l'histoire générale était bâtie sur un grand nombre d'histoires de familles particulières elle y gagnerait en profondeur et en largeur comme en vérité." (4) But there is little incon-

(1) *Histoire romaine*, preface.

(2) See above, Chap. I, page 48 sqq., for a comparison between Carlyle and Gobineau. Carlyle's examples of the Hero-King are Cromwell and Napoleon, both of whom he regarded as upstarts. One might say that while Carlyle's heroes are "geniuses", without respect to blood, Gobineau's are all aristocrats.

Schemann (*Biog.* I, 49) cites also the opinion of Gobineau's friend, Charles de Rémusat: "La vie des hommes illustres est à tout prendre le plus grand monument de l'histoire des nations".

(3) *Histoire des Perses*, tome I, p. 402: "Il est assez curieux de voir que les races arianes aiment à exalter les grands hommes et que tout au rebours les races métissées ont un besoin constant de les rabaisser".

(4) Keller, *Corr.*, p. 157.

sistency in this point of view since the author looked upon the family as a unit in its action upon history, as a series of "fils de roi" exercising their regenerative influence from generation to generation.

It is this insistence on the value of the individual on history that has given the form to one of the greatest of Gobineau's literary works, probably the greatest after the short stories: *La Renaissance* (5). The work consists of a series of dramatic scenes in which Gobineau has used to the best effect his brilliant powers as a writer and his most striking gifts as an historian.

For each of these dramatic episodes Gobineau had written a short preface to serve as an explanation for his treatment of his theme and as an introduction to the historical background of the time he was depicting. Very rightly he decided later not to include these prefaces, probably because they would have spoiled the artistic unity of the text, but it is to them that we turn for an explanation of the ideas which dominated the work and in them we find an interesting summary of the writer's theories regarding history.

Gobineau was undoubtedly aware of certain inconsistencies in his theory of general decadence. In his novel *Les Pléiades* he tried, as we have seen, to explain the fundamental importance of the individual in the general scheme of things by his theory of the "fils de roi." In his introduction to *La Renaissance* he attempts to meet the phenomenon of the ebb and flow of human vitality as expressed in the history of a nation. In a striking figure he compares history to a vast, restless ocean, containing little of interest to a casual glance, yet on careful investigation showing certain bright spots, which appear and disappear. These spots are few. He enumerates them: the Age of Pericles, the Augustan Age, the Middle Ages (XIIth and XIIIth centuries) and the Renaissance. Between these periods the flood of human history sweeps on, apparently a sterile ocean, and yet:

> .... c'est la mer féconde, remuant dans ses profondeurs, promenant sur ses surfaces les germes des choses futures et laissant flotter humblement, sur la face de ses eaux, cette végétation entrelacée, sans éclat, mais constante, qui soulève, au milieu des feuillages touffus plaqués sur la nappe sombre, les fleurs d'or, les grandes merveilles de la vitalité humaine. Ce sont des fleurs d'or, ces époques splendides où l'on bâtit le Parthénon, le Capitole, les Dômes de Beauvais et d'Amiens, et où l'Italie entière éclate de vie, de couleurs bigarrées, d'esprit, d'intelligence, de génie et de beauté. (6)

(5) *La Renaissance: Savonarole, César Borgia, Léon X, Michel-Ange: Scènes Historiques,* Paris, 1877. The Introduction has been published with the title *La Fleur d'or* (Paris, Grasset, 1923).

(6) *La Fleur d'or,* p. 6.

The golden flower is born and develops to its full beauty, but other accumulation, spume of the ocean, is thrown up and, encountering the golden flower, attaches itself to it and gradually overwhelms it. The petals drop, the mass becomes corrupt, merely the flotsam and jetsam of the ocean of time. Yet the flower does not entirely disappear. That which remains, floating on, furnishes the feminine element, which, when it has been fertilized by a "nouvelle cause plastique", will generate another golden flower. So from the ruins of Attic civilization sprang the golden flower of Augustan Rome and from the decay of mediaeval greatness was born the splendour of the Renaissance. History, then, is not the story of mankind's evolution, a story of progress. It is rather a kind of Heraclitan flux:

> ... la mort de toute chose, au lieu d'être la fin de cette chose, n'est rien que le commencement de son appropriation à de nouveaux états. C'est une loi inévitable. Il en résulte la permanence de l'essence intelligente dans ce monde et la nature du rôle que cette essence y est venu jouer; c'est par elle que ce qui apparaît tient de ce qui fut, et que le présent renferme à la fois des parties appréciables du passé et de l'avenir. (7)

This theory is akin to that of Taine, that each age, in being replaced by another, communicates to the succeding one some of its qualities and in that way passes on the vital element and incorporates it into the character of the race, of the nation and individual. Gobineau, however, sees the death of the masculine element, and the survival of a feminine element only, an element capable of being fertilized by the appearance of a new plastic cause ("une nouvelle cause plastique") furnished by a new race. For Taine civilization was carried on by a kind of accretion; for Gobineau, history is merely a succession of bright moments in a wide sea of corruption.

It is one of these "fleurs d'or" that Gobineau is describing in *La Renaissance*. The history of the time is grouped about certain individuals, however, and its artistic interest lies not so much in the general picture of human endeavour and ambition as in the figures of the great men who dominated the age.

Gobineau made no mistake in separating the introduction from the text. Relieved of all theorizing, *La Renaissance* is the one work of the author in which his talents as an artist and historian are not dominated by his ethnological system. Forgetting even his lifelong predilection for the Middle Ages, Gobineau surrenders

(7) *Ibid.* p. 8.

himself entirely to the fascination of this golden flower, for "jamais fleur ne s'épanouit dont les pétales d'or, dont le feuillage somptueux puisse être vanté au-dessus de la merveilleuse floraison du XV• siècle." (8)

We are introduced to the Itay of 1492. Lorenzo the Magnificent, supreme patron of arts and letters, is dead. Leonardo da Vinci is at the height of his glory. The golden flower is rapidly opening. At the end of the work we are at the threshold of decadence. Da Vinci is dead. Raphael, too, has gone and Michael Angelo is prophesying the eclipse of the Renaissance spirit. Within this period the author has packed the exuberant vitality and the artistic glory of the Renaissance.

The work is called "Scènes Historiques", and is intended by the author to present the period through a series of pictures. Dramatic as many parts of it are, it shows no efforts on the part of the author to bring about any artistic unity in form. (9) Gobineau was always unwilling to curtail his opportunities for expression by limiting himself to the narrow requirements of any particular literary type. He undoubtedly chose this hybrid form in order to express the better the fervidness and power of his ideas.

Others before him had attempted to portray in an artistic way the psychology of this period, notably the poet Browning in his Renaissance poems (*The Bishop Orders his Tomb, Fra Lippo Lippi, My Last Duchess,* for example). Browning's work, however, is a series of etchings, while Gobineau's has the variety, the colour and the complexity of huge mural paintings. (10) In each of these scenes the reader is shown the spirit of the time, and the psychology which inspired it, through the personality of one of its chief actors and a semblance of unity is produced by the figures of Machiavelli and Michael Angelo, who appear throughout the work. These chief figures give their names to each part: Savonarole, César Borgia, Jules II, Léon X, Michel-Ange. Behind them is the pulsating life of Renaissance Italy. Here the realism of the piece is to be seen in

(8) *Ibid.*, p. 48.

(9) Gobineau writes (June 2, 1874): "Je me préoccupe beaucoup moins du drame que de la philosophie des tableaux" (Schemann, *Biog.* II, 410).

(10) It will be noticed that Gobineau in dealing with the Renaissance has used the same plan which he used in *Le Cartulaire de Saint Avil* for depicting the history of Christianity; but while this poem is merely a series of sketches, the *Renaissance* is more pretentious, deals with a more restricted period, and is more detailed and more vital.

its most effective form. The canvas is crowded with a host of types of the widest variety: pale hellenists and lusty soldiers of fortune, servile couriers and heroic priests, men at arms, freebooters, peasants, tradesmen, artisans, the rabble of the street and the off-scourings of the camps, politicians and statesmen, women and children, noble ladies and professional assassins, appearing and disappearing and all contributing to the movement of the scene, to that intense desire for action, which is the characteristic of the period. As a writer Gobineau is almost always at his best in describing all the products of energy. It is this quality of action, of intense, virile movement that gives to *La Renaissance* its chief charm as a work of art. The cruel mob eagerly anticipating the martyrdom of Savonarola (11), the death of Raphael (12), the events in the camp of Charles (13), the meeting of the Pacifici (14) and a dozen other scenes are, each in its way, masterpieces of rapid dramatic action. Each scene succeeds in giving that effect of vitality that makes the total picture of the time striking and real to the reader.

But the life of the market place, the highway and the council room form only the background to throw into relief the main actors in the drama. In *La Renaissance* Gobineau's chief characters are not (as they seem to be in the *Abbaye,* in *Les Pléiades,* in *Amadis*) types of historical or moral qualities. They are the chief actors of the drama itself. We feel that they have in their control the course of history and that success or failure lies within their *personal* power.

Among these persons it is obvious that the author has his favourites. The figure of Savonarola is painted in dark colours. He is shown as a type of intellectual and mystic energy, one of a class of men whom the poet has placed in his paradise of Beowulf, side by side with the types of physical violence. But Gobineau seems to have little sympathy with the idealism that is at the base of his acts. In the end Savonarola is sacrificed to the cruelty of the time, apparently because he has been unwilling to translate his ideas into terms of physical violence—because, in other words, he has been lacking in energy. George Eliot's figure of this Catholic Luther is painted with more sympathy. Gobineau's Savonarola is a fanatic

(11) *La Renaissance,* 1922 ed., pp. 138-144.
(12) *Ibid.,* p. 452.
(13) *Ibid.,* p. 359.
(14) *Ibid.,* p. 211.

who will accept martyrdom rather than distort his ethics to further his dreams. He is a dreamer, and Gobineau's world, certainly his Renaissance world, had no room for dreamers.

In direct antithesis to Savonarola stand the figures of the Borgia who next occupy the centre of the stage. Entirely without scruple, cold-blooded, sacrificing everything to ambition, Caesar Borgia is the strong man of Machiavelli's *Prince*. We meet him first as the murderer of his brother-in-law and as he passes from this act to the treacherous murder of the condottieri leaders at Sinigaglia. Through the intricate schemes and plotting that finally brought him to ruin, he always preserves the self-confidence of the strong man. The most noteworthy scene in the book is that in which Pope Alexander VI discloses to the widowed Lucretia the reasons for the assassination of her husband. (15) From the cold cynicism of the opening speech to the last words of Alexander, the scene is crammed with the deep passions that made up the politics of that day. The last speech contains the strongest expression of the divine right of the powerful that is to be found in Gobineau's works. Alexander is advising Lucretia to be brave and to throw aside weakness:

> Sachez désormais que pour ces sortes de personnes que la destinée appelle à dominer sur les autres, les règles ordinaires de la vie se renversent et le devoir devient tout différent. Le bien, le mal se transportent ailleurs, plus haut, dans un autre milieu, et les mérites qui se peuvent approuver dans une femme ordinaire deviendraient chez vous des vices par cela seul qu'ils ne seraient que des causes d'achoppement, de ruine. Or, la grande loi du monde, ce n'est pas de faire ceci ou cela, d'éviter ce point ou de courir à tel autre; c'est de vivre, de grandir et de développer ce qu'on a en soi de plus énergique et de plus grand.... (16)

Nowhere in his works has Gobineau more frankly approached the result of his continual insistence, throughout his works, on the right of the strong man to divorce himself from all ethics, a theory which, even if he were not willing to adopt it, is the natural result of his continual insistence, throughout his works, on the importance of energy, of achievements, above every other consideration.

In the figure of Julius II there is less of this idea of cold-blooded ambition, but the successor of Alexander VI is even more a type

(15) Page 98, 1922 ed.

(16) *Ibid.*, p. 107. Dr. Oscar Levy, in his introduction to the English edition of *La Renaissance* (marked and marred by an ardent anti-Christian spirit), asserts that Gobineau, throughout his works, is strikingly pagan and anti-Christian. This point of view seems to be warranted by Gobineau's treatment of Savonarola and of the majority of his characters, but it leaves out of consideration the figure of Michael Angelo.

of energy. "Lui, il n'a pas d'âge; c'est purement un foyer inextinguible d'énergie." (17) Without scruple like the Borgia ("La vertu ne consiste qu'à réussir"), he has a larger vision of the glory of the Church. Savonarola wished for the unity of Italy under an order that should make of the Church a great spiritual force. Caesar Borgia also worked for a united Italy, but an Italy with the Borgia as the reigning house. Julius II worked for a united Italy with the Papacy as the dominating political power. For this end he made use of the arts to add to the glory of the Church, without sharing the intelligent appreciation of his successor Leo X. With irresistible energy he drives the artists to further efforts. Bramante conceives the splendid plan of the Vatican. Raphael, Michael Angelo and a score of other masters decorate the walls with inimitable frescoes and produce a collection of masterpieces unequalled in any other age of the world's history. Art seconds the efforts of a sinuous diplomacy to make the Papacy great. Finally the disruptive forces in the country are too strong for him: "De l'esprit... du génie... de la vie... de la férocité... rien qui tienne ensemble... c'est l'Italien!" And he dies cursing the foreign invader who was one of the chief causes of this lack of unity.

Leo X, says Gobineau in his preface to the work, "apparaît comme une des premières physionomies qui ne ressemblent plus aux figures du moyen âge... Il annonce l'époque moderne." (18) In him the characteristic of Energy is subordinated to the cult of Beauty. From this point, the picture of dissension in Italy gives way to the description of the Church vitiated and enfeebled by reform, and with this description is mingled the writer's increasing preoccupation with the art of the period. It is significant that when Energy is replaced by the cult of Beauty, the period of decadence begins. The great figure of the work, the artist Michael Angelo, gradually comes to the fore and the book ends with a note of lyric idealism. Opposite the pessimistic figure of Machiavelli (who is pictured as a cynical dilettante, disillusioned by the march of events, and who remains a contemptuous spectator of the drama unfolding around him), the great artist of the period stands out as the prophet and apostle of the eternal in Art.

It is noteworthy that Michael Angelo is the only character in

(17) *Ibid.*, p. 341. See also *La Fleur d'or*, p. 97.

(18) *La Fleur d'or*, p. 103.

the work (with the possible exception of Machiavelli) who grows under the artist's pen. At the beginning impetuous, jealous for his work, believing that the artist needs the spur that detestation of a rival provides, "une âme triste, étroite, obscure, tourmentée" (19) (as his rival Raphael calls him), he mellows as the work goes on. The death of Raphael awakens in him the sentiment of generosity and deep grief. He is torn with sadness at the woes of Italy and we find him at last an old man of eighty nine, wise and tolerant and, above all, strong in a faith in the ultimate triumph of Art. In the last scene between the aged artist and his friend the Marquise de Pescaire, Gobineau strikes that lyrical note which is peculiarly his when his imagination has for the moment got the better of his purely reasoning faculties. The noble patroness expresses some of the pessimism that has been displayed in the preceding pages:

> Il me semble qu'après avoir été inondés de clarté, nos pas chancelants s'avancent dans les ténèbres.

But Michael Angelo replies:

> Ce qui va disparaître ne disparaîtra pas tout entier... Les champs peuvent reposer et rester un temps en jachère; la semence est dans les guérets. Le brouillard peut s'étendre et le ciel gris et terne se couvrir de buées et de pluie; le soleil est là-haut... Qui sait ce qui reviendra? (20)

"Vous êtes las de vivre?" asks the Marquise,and the artist replies:

> Je suis avide au contraire. Je voudrais secouer loin des membres de ma nature réelle ces liens de chair qui les gênent... Non, non ! Ce n'est pas la mort que je sens venir, c'est la vie, la vie dont on ne peut apercevoir ici-bas que l'ombre, et que je vais bientôt posséder tout entière! (21)

Here, in this scene, is the theory of the immortality of human endeavour, which we find in *La Fleur d'or* presented through the mouth of one of the great figures of the period. The Golden Flower dies, but amid the general corruption, a nucleus remains, the "feminine element", which awaits fertilization to bring forth another "golden flower." It is the theory of the immortality of all works of the mind expounded several years previously in *Le Paradis de Béowulf*. All is vanity, Gobineau seems to say, save the fundamental nobility of human endeavour. Races will come and disappear, killed by the fatal virus of race decadence, but the works of the mind, the product of intellects in search of Beauty, are imperishable. The

(19) *Ibid.*, p. 298.
(20) P. 564.
(21) P. 558.

aged artist dares to proclaim this truth in the face of signs of corruption around him: his fellow artists chasing the shadows of cheap notoriety; Titian proclaiming the dethroning of idealism in art and preaching charlatanism ("La gloire ne fait de bruit que par le nombre des acclamations"); artists ceasing to be philosophers and becoming mere faddists. In short, he proclaims this truth in the face of all the signs marking the fading of the Golden Flower. (22) The work that begins with cold realism ends, as does *Amadis,* in a note of epic mysticism.

La Renaissance has been proclaimed, by the Germans particularly, the finest of Gobineau's works. From a literary point of view, at least, it is the best of his historical writings. Certain critics have found it colourless. (23) It is true that it lacks the charm of such bright scenes as, for example, Boccacio has used for the framework of his *Decameron.* The sensuous material is almost entirely lacking. Apart from the figure of the young Apollo-like Raphael, with his sunny loves and graces (24), the characters are stern and full of purpose. The author has found little room for the philanderings of love. The cult of energy demands seriousness, vitality, action. It is this element of action that dominates the whole work and carries us from scene to scene with an almost breathless interest. There is a dynamic power in the poet's language as he describes the energy of his characters.

> Je suis vieux — says Pope Julius — je ne peux pas attendre. Il faut tout faire à la hâte. Est-ce ma faute si les hommes, les événements, les lenteurs du succès, les embarras des revers, cette interminable série de jours, de mois, d'années stériles dont la vie humaine est encombrée m'ont barré si longtemps le passage? Arrivé plus tôt, j'écouterais peut-être les raisons, et encore, non! J'exécuterais davantage! (25)

Throughout its pages the writer seems to stand in admiration of the exuberant vitality of the period. The author's success in portraying the attractiveness of human beings in action is the chief claim of the work to literary merit.

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La Renaissance emphasizes Gobineau's belief in the importance of the individual in the shaping of human events, and this idea is

(22) P. 541.
(23) A. Hallays speaks of its style "uniforme et terne," and Seillière calls it "grisaille" (Seillière, op. cit., chap. IV).
(24) Pp. 290-309.
(25) P. 274.

also found in the *Histoire des Perses,* Gobineau's formal contribution to history. Written in the form of a narrative of the Persian Aryans, it is, in fact, the story of their great men, or, we should probably say, it is the story of the decadence of the race in spite of the efforts of its great men.

Unlike the work on the Renaissance, the *Histoire des Perses* is written to maintain a thesis. Gobineau himself has told us that, in effect, the work is one part of a trilogy of which the other two are the Essay and the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl.* The theory is the same as that of the Essay, applied to a single nation: decadence of a people through blood mixture. From the time when, under Abtyn, these Aryans came from their forced refuge in the Elburz mountains, the historian makes them conscious of their superiority and their glorious destiny. (26) Abtyn himself is the typical Gobinist hero:

> Ainsi pour tous les protagonistes de la race, qu'ils soient iraniens, hindous ou germains, le suprême honneur de la royauté consistait pour Abtyn à combattre plus que ses compagnons, à jouer sa vie où chacun reculait, et à vaincre où les plus braves auraient succombé. (27)

After Abtyn comes Ferydoun, after Ferydoun Cyrus, after Cyrus Darius, Xerxes and the beginning of the decadence. So the history of the nation becomes the story of these great men. In its pages the figure of Cyrus stands out with epic grandeur: "Cyrus est donc un plus grand agent de l'histoire que ne l'a été Alexandre." (28) "Il faisait revivre le noble iranien dans toute l'ancienne conception du mot; c'était un homme de volonté, de grandes vues, et, ce qui ne se trouvait alors dans le monde entier que chez les Scythes et chez les Perses, c'était un homme qui avait de l'honneur... un vif et puissant sentiment du grand et du beau moral et un besoin impérieux de faire quelque chose qui tirait son nom de la parité." (29) Against that of Cyrus the figure of Alexander appears puny. Since the early days (1848) when Gobineau wrote his tragedy *Alexandre,* he had evidently revised his opinion concerning the great Macedonian. Now he appears as the sower of racial corruption. He brings corruption to the Iranians and in addition he makes wide the path of Semitic invasion into Greece, thus continuing the process that had started as early as Homer's times and which corrupted the

(26) *Histoire des Perses,* vol. I, p. 50.
(27) *Ibid.,* vol. I, p. 212.
(28) *Ibid.,* I, 539.
(29) *Ibid.,* II, 289.

stock of Europe. (30) In order to extol the virtues of the Persians Gobineau belittles the Greeks, he minimizes the importance of their victories (31) and throws doubt and contempt on the accounts of their historians.

Under Darius the highest point of Persian civilization is reached and passed. The virtue and power of personal rule gives way to a federation, the Hero-King is displaced by the administrative statesman. Neverthless "le régime perse sous Darius, comme il l'avait été sous Cyrus, fut le plus éclairé et le plus sage que l'antiquité ait connu." Under Xerxes the decadence becomes apparent, with the increasing importance of the harem (a Semitic institution) and its corrupt intrigues, in which the passions and ambitions of women play an important part. Gobineau cites the story of Esther:

> La fille juive se montra tout à fait à la hauteur de l'esprit de férocité qui va se déployer de plus en plus dans le harem royal jusqu'à la fin de la dynastie. (32)

To this menace are added the favouritism of aliens (Jews, Lydians and Greeks) and the gradual creation of an army of mercenaries. With the coming of the Parthians the feudal system takes a firm hold on the country and with Ardeshyr, who brings in democracy and the institution of an ecclesiastical caste, the decadence is complete.

Into this framework Gobineau fits the history of the Iranian people just as he has compressed history into the story of his family in the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl*. The work has been almost completely ignored by professional historians and, with the book on the cuneiforms, it is the least read and most entirely forgotten of all his works. (33) Gobineau the professional historian, like Gobineau the ethnologist, is not, even today, taken seriously.

In the *Histoire des Perses* Gobineau has given us his views regarding the science of history. Like Taine and Renan he believed in the essential importance of history among the sciences. In an

(30) *Ibid.*, II, 357: "Il n'hellénisa pas l'Asie; tout au rebours, il acheva d'asiatiser la Grèce et prépara l'immersion de l'Occident romain dans les mêmes eaux."

(31) In this he anticipates modern scholarship which tends to look upon Marathon as an unimportant skirmish.

(32) *Ibid.*, II, 174.

(33) In the *Histoire des Perses* Gobineau has attempted to harmonize the accounts of the classical writers, as Herodotus and Ctesias, with the poems of Firdousi and other Persian writers, as for example the accounts of the birth of Cyrus (I, 353-4), the question of the identity of Abtyn (I, 237) and the stories regarding the birth of Alexander (II, 365).

unfinished article found among his manuscripts, entitled *Vues sur l'Histoire générale,* he reviews the progress of the philosophy of history and condemns Bossuet, Voltaire, Thierry and others for writing history from a predetermined point of view. On the other hand, he says:

> ... l'Histoire ne pouvait plus désormais revenir à n'être qu'un seul catalogue de faits chronologique, de même que les différents systèmes auxquels on la soumettait, erronés, fragiles, peu durables, témoignent de la conscience certaine d'une raison d'être.... Il s'agissait de trouver cette raison et il est certain, désormais, que jusqu'à cette découverte le travail continuera. (34)

The true science of history, then, has not yet been discovered. Gobineau condemns the certitude of those who have thought they had discovered such a method. He condemns the prejudices of the classical historians, as well as the religious prejudices of the mediaeval historians who "contribuent au moins autant à mutiler, à défigurer, à ruiner les annales humaines que les archéologues et les savants." (35) The field is still open for a scholar to define the true approach to the historical fact and to show the correct interpretation of the fact.

But when we examine what Gobineau has to suggest to take the place of the theories he condemns, we find his views curiously full of inconsistencies and paradoxes. In the chapter of the *Histoire* entitled "Façons de comprendre l'histoire iranienne et ses sources" (36), he explains the methods he used in writing the work and suggests that they should be applied to all history. The fundamental idea behind these views is that of impressionism. While Guizot, Barante, Renan and others were attempting to apply strictly scientific methods to historical research, Gobineau came forward and boldly proclaimed the pernicious tyranny of the historic fact, as the "scientific" historians used the term.

An historic fact, he says, exerts an influence in two ways: by the significance of the fact itself and by the impression or reaction it creates. If, then, the content of the fact is unknown, we can judge it by the sum of the impressions produced by it, and he goes even farther by adding that, even if this is impossible, there still remains the opinion of contemporary writers and that of the writers of

(34) MS. 3511.

(35) Op. cit., I, 244.

(36) *Ibid.*, II, 1.

succeeding generations. Whether Henri IV really said "Tout est perdu fors l'honneur" or not matters little. It is what the people think he is likely to have said that is important. With these ideas in mind he goes on to condemn the suppression of the anecdote, a point of view which would have undoubtedly found sympathy with his friend Mérimée. (37) He praises Herodotus (who is "more Asiatic than Greek") because the Greek historian is more interested in "details" than in "truth" and because he reproduces not only the fact but the impression created by the fact. (38)

He would, then, reduce history to an accumulation of opinion, literary and otherwise, formed around the nucleus of a fact or of a situation, this accumulation being retained at its full value even if, and when, the fact itself has disappeared. Like Michelet, whom he resembles so much, (39) he would make history more than a science. He would combine it with the arts. He would accept all sources as of equal merit. He would give to the historian the same power of selection he demanded for the artist. (40) This is what he actually does in the *Histoire des Perses,* (41) and Renan, in a review of the work, rightly objects to this point of view and shows that evidence accumulated from balladistic or legendary sources of different periods is not of equal value. (42)

Thierry and the Romantic school of historians had asserted the rights of the imagination in the interpretation of history and Gobineau's theories link him to this school. *La Renaissance* is history

(37) "Je n'aime dans l'histoire que les anecdotes" says Mérimée at the beginning of his *Chronique du règne de Charles IX* (1829).

(38) *Ibid.*, I, 245.

(39) Michelet viewed history both as a science and as an art and in his writings was a poet as well as an historian. In this, in his power of emotionalizing history, as well as in his interest in paintings, medals, etc., Gobineau was akin in spirit to the great Romantic historian. On the other hand, Michelet minimized the importance of the great man in history. For him the great man was not a shaper of the destiny of a people, but rather the quintessence of the past and present tendencies of the nation (*Histoire romaine,* preface).

(40) *Des Buts techniques de la Littérature* (See below, chap. IV).

(41) He writes (*Histoire des Perses,* I, 266): "L'histoire à laquelle je tends est beaucoup moins celle des faits, matière éternelle de soupçons, de répétitions et de discussions fondées, que celle de l'impression produite par ces faits sur l'esprit des hommes au milieu desquels ils se sont manifestés... Si je ne suis pas sûr du tout, il s'en faut, d'avoir trouvé et donné de tel événement, voire de telle bataille, le récit le plus authentique, je le suis du moins, et cela m'est bien autrement important, d'avoir reproduit l'image que le peuple d'Iran a pensé être la sienne à ses différents âges."

(42) *Journal Asiatique,* 6e série, tome XVI, pp. 22 ff.

as Thierry would have it written, with an even more arbitrary use of the faculties of selection and interpretation.

But Gobineau goes beyond this. His imagination is not always content with more collection and production. It does not merely attempt to supplement the fact with other material. It goes behind the fact and seeks in the minds of the people an interpretation of events and documents. Here the writer relinquishes the methods of the scientific historian to base his judgments on purely irrational concepts. He consorted so much with Oriental scholars that at times he seems to have rejected the psychology and habits of thinking of the West and to have turned to the irrational methods of thinking of the Orient.

A striking example of this mystical element in Gobineau is his interpretation of the cuneiform characters. By the middle of the century, when Gobineau began to be interested in these ancient writings of the Iranian plateau, the gravest problems in connection with their decipherment had been solved. Through the efforts of Niebuhr (1765), of Grotefend (1802), of Lassen (1836) and notably through the remarkable work of Rawlinson on the Behistun inscription (1846-51), it had been fairly well proved that the inscriptions were trilingual, that they were written in ancient Persian, Susian and Babylonian and that they dealt with the doings of Cyrus and the Persian kings.

In 1858 Gobineau published a monograph entitled *Lectures des textes cunéiformes,* in which he cast doubts upon the interpretation of the Rawlinson school, ascribing its development to an error beginning with Grotefend and he announced his intention of seeking a solution "par une voie entièrement nouvelle." Little notice seems to have been taken of this attack and in 1864 he followed it with a more pretentious statement of his views. In two large volumes entitled *Traité des écritures cunéiformes* he uncompromisingly opposes the accepted interpretation of the inscription, accusing his opponents of having been seduced by "une occasion apparente de restituer la constitution d'une langue perdue," and with seemingly careful precision and a large number of citations from Oriental and classical writers he tries to prove that they are cryptic utterances of a talismanic nature. The Behistun inscription, as he reads it, is a series of ejaculatory expressions which have little coherence and less meaning, (43) in striking contrast to the political interpretation of Rawlinson and its definite and logical significance.

We have nothing to do here with the merits of the two interpretations, but a consideration of Gobineau's ideas gives us an enlightening insight into the workings of his mind, and particularly the extent to which his imagination predominated in Oriental metters. The *Traité* is steeped in the cabbalistic mysticism of the East. We meet constantly such phrases as: "L'Ecriture plus que la Voix est l'expression de la pensée de Dieu" (44), "La parole, l'agent producteur de l'Univers visible," (45) as the author cites the *halaka* interpretation of the Talmud or the *agada* and discusses the mystical oriental ideas of the *Logos*.

In spite of his claim that he has used "purely mathematical methods", we feel, as we read the works in question, that the author has divorced himself more and more from the logical processes of the West and given himself up to the vague mental meanderings which are the base of the occultism of his friends the mullahs, whose advice and guidance he so frequently sought. (46) The *Traité* has passed into the limbo of forgotten books (47), but it is interesting to us because it shows clearly one aspect of Gobineau's mentality, an aspect

(43) The following is his interpretation of the first lines of the Behistun inscription:

1° Sens propitiatoire:

Le maître, le dominateur, c'est Lui, le gardien élevé ! Une force immense l'accompagne ! Sa grandeur a pour ornement la vie ! Lui, il est le bienfaiteur, sublime, magnanime ! Il enveloppe toutes choses ! Il produit ce qui arrive ! Le souverain, c'est lui ! Le souverain, c'est lui ! Lui, il est Bel, (la planète de Jupiter qui préside à la bonne fortune) ! Ton protecteur ! Lui, lui, il est Bel (le cœur de Maître) !

2° Sens imprécatoire:

La douleur, la discorde, c'est ça ! L'obstacle, le crime, le fumier, l'expulsion, le vide, le crime, l'effacement, la ruine, c'est ça ! Le fumier, l'amertume, la mutilation, l'oubli, le néant ! La ruine, la séparation, c'est ça ! La chute, la ruine, la guenille, l'épine, l'envie, l'horreur, c'est celui-là ! (*Traité*, II, 93).

The following quotation is a good example of the use the author makes of oriental authorities:

Le savant rabbin Abba Henyamin était d'avis que si l'œil avait la faculté de tout voir, personne au monde n'oserait tenir ferme contre l'épouvante dont on serait saisi en contemplant la foule des esprits méchants qui nous assaillent (*Ibid.*, II, 255).

(44) *Traité*, II, 163.

(45) *Ibid.*, II, 125.

(46) He writes to his friend Adolphe Francke (March 29, 1864): "Ce sont des rapprochements de faits positifs combinés entre eux qui m'ont conduit à une bizarre lecture et tout à fait étrangère à la nature des idées que nous avons l'habitude de manier et de considérer comme sacrées," and in the same letter he says, "J'ai donc écrit le second volume en quelque sorte sous la dictée des rabbins et des magiciens arabes et persans pour commenter jusque dans les moindres détails les conclusions auxquelles la méthode purement mathématique m'avait amené." (Lettres inédites du comte de Gobineau à M. Adolphe Francke, *Revue Internationale de Sociologie*, Paris, 1916).

that is the product of his dwelling in the realms of Oriental knowledge and of Oriental psychology. It is significant because it serves to connect Gobineau the historian with Gobineau the orientalist.

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The writer of the *Trois Ans en Asie* was an orientalist by training and by predilection. From his earliest youth the Orient cast a spell on him. Amélie Laigneau, the woman who knew him better than anyone else during these early days, has told us how youthful Gobineau used to gather his comrades around him while he read to them from the *Arabian Nights:* (48)

Il ne rêvait que mosquées et minarets, se disait musulman, prêt à faire son pèlerinage à la Mecque. Il jurait par le prophète et se serait volontiers mis au régime d'un pilau et des confitures de pâtes de roses. Il traduisait des ouvrages persans, ceux du poète Firdousi, je crois, dont il s'entretenait sans cesse. Dans ces travaux, son langage s'imprégnait des couleurs et des images les plus poétiques. Il nous racontait des histoires merveilleuses, nous forçant à nous asseoir à la façon orientale pour l'écouter. (49)

It was to the imagination of the young poet that the East appealed with its colour, its mystery, its splendour. This imaginative

(47) The work was very badly received. An anonymous writer in *Fraser's Magazine* (November, 1865) devoted twenty pages to a defence of Rawlinson and a careful analysis of the weakness of Gobineau's theories, every step of which, he says, "is an effort of universal confusion." Others followed in condemning it. The English orientalist E. G. Browne, in his *Literary History of Persia* (London, 1902) scornfully remarks: "Nor need the wild theories as to the talismanic character of the inscriptions propounded by M. le Comte de Gobineau detain us even for a moment." The *Journal Asiatique* was content with a mere bibliographical reference to the work. The article on the cuneiforms in the *Encyc. Brit.* does not mention it. The great contemporary orientalist F. Oppert devotes a dozen lines in his article "Cunéiformes" in the *Grande Encyclopédie* to ridiculing the writer, and a contemptuous silence has been the attitude of other orientalists. Some German reviews noticed the work, notably the *Augsburg Gazette,* "Die Deutung der Keilionschriften durch den Grafen Gobineau" (Beilage n° 233).

Gobineau resented this attitude very much and he endeavoured to get various people in England and France to review the work, but without avail. His letters of this period show with what fervour he upheld his viewpoint. See for example his correspondence with Lord Lytton, 1865 (MS. 3527).

(48) *Trois Ans en Asie,* tome I.

(49) Schemann: *Biographie,* I, 40, cited by Lange (p. 124). It was at this period that Gobineau wrote the poem *Dilfiza,* which was dedicated to Amélie. The poem, he says, is written "dans ce genre de tristesse sauvage et mâle qui caractérise la poésie arabe avant Mohammed" (cited by Minorsky: "Gobineau et la Perse," *Europe,* Oct. 1, 1923).

As early as 1830, he was beginning to dream of a voyage to the Orient. His sister Caroline says of him (during his early life in Brie): "Les obscurités de toutes les grammaires comparées ne l'effrayaient pas; sa vocation d'orientaliste était à peu près résolue" (Strasbourg, MS. 3539).

element is to be found in all his writings. It gives colour and emotional content to his ethnological and psychological descriptions and furnishes some of the most readable pages in *Trois Ans en Asie* and in *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*. Even the *Histoire des Perses,* formal in style as it is, shows the effect of the author's emotional reaction to his subject.

In later years, when he actually visited these lands of his dreams, he was still under the spell of their almost mystic charm. At Suez he approaches the East with the reverence of "un néophyte qui va devenir initié et qui arrive sur le seuil du temple, touche de la main le rideau étendu devant le sanctuaire." (50) He saw Ormuz not as a shrivelled little village on the Persian gulf but as the great mart of the Middle Ages whose harbour was filled with the ships from the four corners of the earth. (51) Egypt seemed weighted with the mysteries of the past: "C'est là l'Egypte, c'est là l'histoire immense qui frappe et qu'on ne sait pas." (52) With what a thrill he saw the first camels, the first palm trees! (53) How keenly he felt the immensity of the desert:

> Rien ne vivait dans l'immense étendue que les astres, habitants de la voûte étoilée; et comme ils étaient seuls, que la terre était muette, leur scintillement paraissait plus vif et leur vie doublée. (54)

Riding across the Persian plains he saw in the half naked children clinging to their mothers' dresses potential heirs of the great Cyrus. (55) In spite of his extended knowledge, his keen observation and his intelligent analysis of people and habits, the Orient always remained for him the Orient of *Halji Baba* and of the *Arabian Nights*. It is this feeling that has given colour and force to his description of the noisy activity of the bazaars, (56) of the life of the caravan, of

(50) *Trois Ans en Asie,* I, 45.

(51) *Ibid.,* I, 130.

(52) *Ibid.,* I, 18.

(53) *Ibid.,* I, 9.

(54) *Ibid.,* I, 41.

(55) *Histoire des Perses,* Tome II, chap. VI, p. 482. This complete absorption in the charm of the East held him to the last. In one of his letters he tells of a night spent in Tabriz on his dash to the coast with his little fever-stricken daughter. He was walking in the evening for recreation and stumbled on a churchyard. The atmosphere of the place, the newly opened graves, the air charged with death and desolation, the fear for his beloved wife and daughter came upon him with intense horror. And yet, he writes, he knew that once away from the country he would long to return (letter of March 20, 1857, MS. 3518).

(56) *Nouvelles Asiatiques,* 1924 ed., p. 209.

the nostalgia of the desert. (57) It is this impassioned recollection of Asia that produced the best pages of the *Nouvelles Asiatiques*.

But another current came very early to mingle with the dreams inspired by the stories of Scheherazade. Shortly after arriving in Paris as a young man he sough out the Oriental scholars and interested himself in Oriental languages. He became acquainted with Quatremère, Reinaud and that group of scholars who were laying the foundations of France's preeminence in Oriental studies. He studied Persian and Modern Arabic. He read the Koran and attempted translations of the Persian poets, and this acquaintance with the languages of the Iranian plateau, shallow as it may have been in certain phases, materially assisted him, as a point of departure, when he went to the Orient. It is doubtful whether Gobineau ever obtained a profound knowledge of these Oriental tongues. He seemed to lack the character of the patient searcher after minute facts which is necessary for the philologist and particularly for the European orientalist. In scholarship he was brilliant rather than deep and when he attempted to produce learned works, as in the case of the *Histoire des Perses* and the *Traité des écritures cunéiformes*, the essential dilettantism of his keen mind mistook a wide knowledge of phenomena for a complete understanding of the subject. This is the explanation of the unfavourable reception of the *Histoire*. Gobineau was not an Orientalist in the narrower sense of the term: an archeologist or a philologist. His orientalism led him into fields which, up to his time, had not been officially admitted within the fields of Oriental studies, namely, psychology and sociology.

But if Gobineau lacked the minute accuracy of the scholars of his time, he possessed a different type of knowledge, equally valuable in its way. His knowledge was of the empirical kind. He spoke the language of the people. He mingled with them and obtained their point of view. His works are full of references to the life of the bazaars, (58) where he spent many hours gossiping with the shopkeepers. He became a rabid curio hunter and made a collection of manuscripts, medals and carved stones of considerable value. (59)

(57) *Ibid.*, "La Vie de Voyage".

(58) See for example *Trois Ans en Asie*, I, 193, 283, 285.

(59) For a catalogue of the Gobineau collection see the *Revue Archéologique*, 1874, "Catalogue d'une collection d'intailles asiatiques." Several of his manuscripts were sold to the British Museum; for a discussion of the most important of these, the *Shah Nameh*, see *Atheneum*, May 31, 1884.

He made friends with native scholars and, even if he learned little of any scientific value from them and obtained much misinformation, he gained an unusual insight into the native mind and an acquaintance with the superstitions of the people, a type of knowledge of which an intelligence of Gobineau's type could make good use and of which he did make good use in his brilliant chapters of the *Religions et Philosophies*. It is this aspect of Gobineau's scholarship which is particularly valuable, in as much as it resulted in books on the Oriental peoples unique in their point of view and remarkably true in their spirit and information.

Gobineau's oriental works may be divided into two groups: those of formal erudition, which we have already mentioned: the *Histoire des Perses* and the *Traité des écritures cunéiformes*, and those of a more personal character. The last named include the *Nouvelles Asiatiques, Trois Ans en Asie* and *Religions et Philosophie dans l'Asie Centrale*.

Trois Ans en Asie is composed of two parts: the first a record of the journey from France to Ispahan, and the second a description of the habits, customs and traditions of the Persian people of today. (60) In the first part of the work it is Gobineau the ethnologist that is prominent; we continually meet such phrases as: "Les Coptes ne sont donc pas une partie de la population égyptienne très agréable à regarder", "L'Arabe nomade d'Egypte a l'air d'un soldat, d'un soudard, d'un pillard", "Parler des lascars, c'est décrire un pandémonium", Les Albanais sont restés, dans le monde moderne, la plus entière et la plus pure personnification (61) de la force brutale et du mépris absolu de la vie humaine". On each face the traveller seems to have attempted to read the history of its stock and to have placed each in his own hierarchy of races and peoples. The second part is a summary of the state of Persian society in the nineteenth

(60) The literature on Persia before Gobineau had been chiefly (1) learned discussions of the religions of the Iranian plateau, such as Thomas Hyde's *His tory of the Religion of the Ancient Persians, Parthians and Medes*, (London, 1700), Anquetil du Perronê's *Zenda-Avesta, ouvrage de Zoroastre* (1771), Sylvestre de Sacy's *Mémoires sur diverses antiquités de la Perse* (1793); (2) accounts of travellers, among which the most important are those of Tavernier, Chardin, Petit de la Croix and Pedro de Xexeira. James Morier's picaresque novel *Hajji Baba of Ispahan* (London, 1824), which Scott ranked with Fielding and Gil Blas (*Quarterly Rey.*, oct. 1825) contains valuable pictures of the social habits of the people, as does *Sketches of Persia* by Sir John Malcolm (London, 1849).

(61) *Trois Ans en Asie*, vol. I, chapters IV, V, VI.

century, the different classes of society, their characteristics, the social manners of the people; a mass of material written with an ease, and at the same time with a grip on the essentials of the subject, which marks the work as a real contribution to travel literature.

With *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* Gobineau definitely places himself on the list of contributors to orientalist literature. E. G. Browne, the eminent English orientalist, who treats the *Histoire* so contemptuously, says of it: "Gobineau's account is still the most clear, lively and concise which I have met with in any European language." (62) The first chapter remains and is likely to remain a classic of its kind. In these pages Gobineau, who has announced his intention of considering "la vraie nature du génie asiatique," (63) has explained the moral and religious character of the people of Asia and has indicated the difference between the psychology of the East and the West, particularly in regard to philosophy, metaphysics and religion. It is written with a simplicity that is deceiving, for it hides the keenness of observation and the wealth of experience which alone would make such a work possible. His explanation of the *ketmân,* that system of moral duplicity the purpose of which is to disguise the religious faith of those who practice it, gives an illuminating insight into the differences between the Oriental and the Christian attitude towards religion (64). The glorification of the abstract and of the supernatural, the absence of logic, the function of silence and the prevalence of tolerance among the Asiatics are brilliantly explained in those few pages. The most remarkable part of the *Religions* is, perhaps, the author's description of the nineteenth century cult of the Bab, known as Babism, the first description of this religion to reach Europe. Gobineau obtained much of his information from the musulman Lessan el Moulk (who had undoubtedly been a spectator of some of the scenes he describes) and from the manuscript of Hajjí Mirzá Jání of Kashar, the oldest historian of the movement. (65) The account of the dreamy young Oriental (he died at twenty-seven) who started as a reformer, drew

(62) E. G. Browne: *Persian History in Modern Times,* Cambridge, 1924. p. 403.

(63) *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale,* p. 2.

(64) In another place, E. G. Browne says: "I personally owe more to this book than to any other book about Persia" (*Persian Hist.,* p. 153).

(65) This MS. was brought by Gobineau to Europe and is now at the Bibliothèque Nationale (Anc. supp. 2511, n° 4669).

to his banner thousands who had never seen him and finally suffered a martyr's death, is given with a dramatic terseness. Here is such a study as Renan dreamed of when he wrote his great work on Christianity: the re-creation of the birth and early development of a religion. But Gobineau possessed one great advantage over the author of *La Vie de Jésus*. He was dealing with phenomena that had but recently occurred. He heard the story from living witnesses and was therefore able to separate fact from its legendary accretions. In other words he was able to write a "scientific" history of the birth of the religion.

Babism, in its early stages, hid under the cloak of the *ketmân* until the religious fervour of the devotees and the number of proselytes forced the attention of the government, a stage in its development which was hastened by the Bab's attack on the ignorance and vices of the mullahs. Persecution followed. The followers of the Bab resorted to force to oppose force. Massacre served only to stamp the religion more firmly in the minds of the people. Finally one by one the centres of the religion were suppressed. Mullah Mohammed Ali died at Zendjan, the beautiful woman proselyte Gouret-oul-Ayn was burned at Teheran and the Bab with his followers were martyred at Tabriz. Then, with the death of the Bab, the religion passed into its political stage. His successor claimed the throne, and the sect was finally suppressed as a political revolt.

The story is a moving one on account of its conciseness, its realism and the care which the author has taken, while adequately describing the emotional reaction of Babism on the people, to keep the narrative free from any legendary material which might warp and distort the facts. Scattered through the narrative are the author's reflections and observations on the religious genius of the Asiatic, a commentary which serves to add considerably to the narrative. Gobineau has shown, as De Groot has done for China (66), the peculiar relation between political revolt and religious mysticism which makes governmental intolerance, in a country otherwise tolerant, a political necessity:

> Là [en Perse] personne ne remuerait un doigt pour une cause politique... Il y faut, pour émouvoir les âmes, des spéculations religieuses, et rien de moins. (67)

Here again Gobineau shows himself to be a psychologist in his

(66) J. J. de Groot: *Sectarianism and Religious Persecution in China*, Amsterdam, 1903.

(67) *Les Religions*, vol. I, p. 291.

ability to observe the phenomena of the mind. In his success in keeping himself outside his story, the writer has given it an air of classic simplicity which makes the events he relates all the more vital. The style is often almost abrupt in its objectivity. (68) We detect at times, however, that combination of perspicacity and irony which is the peculiar characteristic of the author's style. Speaking of peace overtures between Mullah Mohammed-Ali and the government, he says:

> A la vérité, les Orientaux ont souvent de ces naïvetés, tant lorsqu'ils désirent tromper que lorsqu'ils s'empressent d'être trompés; c'est ce qu'en Europe on a la bonhomie d'appeler l'astuce des Asiatiques. (69)

In his history of Babism Gobineau attempted to present that religion in the spiritual and social atmosphere in which it was created. In his description of the *tekyèh,* the religious drama of Persia, Gobineau has again traced the rise of an institution and has shown its roots in the habits and thoughts of the people. As he describes the massacre of Kerbela, source of the inspiration of this drama, he sees in it a Persian Roncevaux, forming the nucleus of a great literary genre. Like the *Chansons* the legend accumulated purely extraneous elements, the number and variety of the pieces being increased from outside sources (he cites, for example, the story of Joseph). (70) Here again Gobineau is a pioneer, being one of the first to show the similarity of Oriental with primitive European theatrical technique, in its religious source as well as in its stage procedure. (71) But it is chiefly the social aspects of the drama in which he is interested. He dwells on the fervour of the people, the democracy of the audience, the emotional reaction of the crowds. He makes his narrative vivid by telling his personal experiences at the *takyèh.* In terse prose he places before the reader the scene in the primitive theatre with its atmosphere charged with emotion, ending

(68) It is this highly objective style which causes the anti-christian Oscar Levy to suggest that, in writing the history of the religion of Bab, Gobineau might have meant it as a parody on Christianity (*The Renaissance,* Eng. ed., London, 1913. Intr. p. lii). Similarities are obvious even to the most unobservant reader and they undoubtedly suggested themselves to Gobineau. There is, however, absolutely no internal evidence to suggest that Gobineau meant the narrative as a parody.

(69) Op. cit. I, 281.

(70) *Ibid.,* II, 116.

(71) He cites the Greek dramatists and mentions the Shakespearean theatre. These similarities have been pointed out by a recent writer for the Chinese drama (Zucker: *The Chinese Drama,* New-York, 1925).

with a picture of the ecstatic rapture into which a member of the audience passes under the influence of the moment. (72) His account is completed by a translation of one of the best known of these dramas: *Les Noces de Kassem.* The simplicity and intensity and the high lyrical beauty of this little dramatic piece is a striking piece of evidence of the vitality of this religious drama. After reading the translation of Gobineau we can readily understand the impression made upon the translator by the performance of the piece.

In form *Trois Ans en Asie* is a continuous, coherent description of the Persian people and their social classes and institutions, while *Religions* is in the nature of a compilation. But this distinction is only superficial. Both of them have the same point of view, the same style, the same subject: a description of the Oriental mind as typified in the habits and institutions of the people.

What then is the sum of Gobineau's ideas concerning the Orient? In the first place, he is deeply impressed by the importance of the place of the Orient in history. "Tout ce que nous pensons et toutes les manières dont nous pensons ont leur origine en Asie," he says at the opening of his book. (73) Having started with this realization of the importance of his subject he tries to approach it without prejudice. The great value of Gobineau's Oriental work lies in the element of universality which dominates his point of view. In his introduction to the *Nouvelles Asiatiques* he condemns the theory of the moralist that man is everywhere the same:

> On s'aperçoit sans peine qu'un Chinois possède deux bras et deux jambes, deux yeux et un nez comme un Hottentot ou un bourgeois de Paris; mais il n'est pas nécessaire de causer une heure avec chacun de ces êtres pour s'apercevoir et conclure qu'aucun lien intellectuel et moral n'existe entre eux, si ce n'est la conviction qu'il faut manger quand on a faim et dormir quand le sommeil presse. (74)

Gobineau, like Rudyard Kipling, was intensely interested in the problems of contact between East and West. His point of view, however, was entirely different from that of the English writer. Kipling, as one of the "native born", was brought up in the atmosphere of the superior race. From the people around him he had observed the differences in psychological processes which all foreigners in the East observe. He never seems, however, to have penetrated beneath the surface in his understading of the Oriental soul. He was always a man of the conquering race, dominated by a natio-

(72) Op. cit. II, 148-50.
(73) *Ibid.*, I, 1.
(74) *Nouvelles Asiatiques*, 1913 ed., p. 5.

nalism which is at times almost Hebraic in its conviction that his is the chosen people.

Gobineau, on the other hand, came to the Orient as a mature man, with his sympathies already aroused. Through his race theories he had the advantage of being completely dissociated from the prejudices of nationalism. This broader point of view gave him the opportunity of studying dispassionately the phenomena of an entirely alien civilization.

In *Trois Ans en Asie* Gobineau has discussed this question of the relations between East and West. (75) Like Kipling he saw a certain futility in the contact. He begins by denying that any nation ever civilized another. Certainly, he says, Greece and Rome never did; on the contrary they suffered intellectually and morally from trying to do so. (76) He rejects the Kipling theory of the "White Man's Burden", for he disapproves of "cette ardeur extraordinaire qui pousse les nations de l'occident vers l'Asie," though he admits that there will always be attempts to occidentalize the East. These attempts, however, are foredoomed to failure, (77) and he sums up his convictions regarding the encroachment of the West in the Orient with the words: "l'Asie est un mets très séduisant mais qui empoisonne ceux qui le mangent."

He also suspects the young occidentalized Oriental who tries to bridge the gulf. His description of Hussien Kouly Agha, the Persian student of Saint Cyr, who has returned to his native land proud of his foreign education, but unable to put it to any vital use in the servcie of his country, is a picture which can be duplicated many times in any Oriental country today. (78) Gobineau admits the value of this type of "missionary" but believes that he will have very little influence in reducing the moral differences between East

(75) Chapter entitled: "Résultats probables des rapports entre l'Europe et l'Asie" (II. vi).

(76) *Ibid.*, pp. 222, ff.

(77) Here the anti-nationalism of Gobineau differs from the British imperialism of Kipling. Admiring the English as he undoubtedly did, Gobineau nevertheless had a poor opinion of their imperialistic policy, which he considered unenlightened and despotic. (See, for example, *Hist. des Perses*, II. 22). "L'impuissance de l'Angleterre est écrite ici partout," he writes from Persia to Prokesch-Osten, July 19 1855. "J'ai remarqué déjà dans la mer des Indes, la mer rouge et le golfe persique combien peu la Grande Bretagne avait pu faire, rien qu'en comparant ses œuvres avec celles des Portugais" (MS. 3524).

(78) *Les Religions et Philosophies*, I. 153. Gobineau has introduced this character also in "La Guerre des Turcomans" (*Nouv. As.*, 1924 ed., p. 253).

and West. These differences he considers ineradicable and eternal. The problem of Oriental contact with the Occident, he points out, was not created by the advent of modern imperial commercialism. It has its roots far deeper, in psychological and spiritual phenomena.

Count Herman Keyserling, who has the same world vision as Gobineau, has discussed the problem in his *Travel Diary of a Philosopher* and his conclusion is much the same as that of the author of *Trois Ans en Asie*. (79) The East must work out its own salvation by taking what is most fundamental in its own traditions and vitalizing them, when necessary, with the best traditions of the Christian West. Both Gobineau and Keyserling see great reserves of spiritual force in the East, reserves which, in spite of all statements by the apostles of occidentalization to the contrary, stand no danger of becoming exhausted.

Yet Gobineau felt the menace of the great populations of the Orient. In his long poem *Amadis,* he pictures the end of civilization in the West when the Asiatics, invited by Russia, overrun Europe and trample its culture under foot, and, in an article written in his last years, he reiterates this opinion. (80) In this belief his Orientalism meets again that basic theory of his philosophy, the conviction that miscegenation will, in the end, result in world ruin.

The eighteenth century "philosophers" attempted to prove the essential similarity between Occidental and Oriental peoples. Gobineau takes the opposite point of view by showing that there are irreconcilable differences. What are these differences? The chief of them, that which dominates all the rest, is that the Orientals lack "bon sens" (that is, according to Gobineau, the power of thinking and judging objectively). Hence their contempt for the Fact, their scorn of the virtue of consistency, their tolerance of other opinions, their admiration for the abstruse, the vague, the mystical. Hence their contempt for Western materialism, for Western efficiency

(79) Eng. ed., vol. II, "Peking."

(80) "Ce qui se passe en Asie" (*Revue du Monde Latin*, Aug. 1885). This article was originally published in German in the *Bayreuther Blätter* (May, 1881) entitled: "Ein Urtheil über die jetzige Weltlage" where it was preceded by a preface written by Wagner.

Gobineau, like Kipling, was interested in the problem of Russia. He saw in her a menace to Europe. He was particularly attracted to the problem of her Mongolian elements. We have seen how he discussed this problem in "La Danseuse de Shamakha." It is significant that in both cases in this story (that of the danseuse and that of Assanoff) it is the West which gains a moral victory over the East.

and for Western ideas of time and order. It is the realization and appreciation of this difference which causes Gobineau to express his admiration for the tolerance of Islam (81), and for the wealth of its religious and philosophical thought. (82) On the other hand he shows, chiefly by implication and example, the moral turpitude of the people, their ethical opportunism, their lack of adequate ideas of justice, the peculiar tone of their patriotism, (83) even while stressing the fact that many of the Western virtues are not absent from the Orient. (84)

J.-J. Rousseau, in his *Discours sur l'inégalité,* (85) regretted that the philosopher did not travel and that the accounts of foreign countries had come from the pens of soldiers, sailors, merchants or missionaries, men who were not by training capable of understanding what they saw. He says:

> Quels voyages nous aurions eus si un Montesquieu, un Buffon, un Diderot, un Duclos, un d'Alembert, un Condillac ou des hommes de cette trempe, voyageant pour leurs compatriotes, observaient et décrivaient comme ils savent le faire la Turquie, l'Egypte...

The Romantic generation which followed Rousseau did little to bring to fulfilment the wish of their great protagonist. (86) During

(81) Gobineau follows Carlyle (*Heroes and Hero Worship,* "The Hero as Prophet") in championing the cause of Islam against the charges of sensuality and intolerance. He points out that there is in Mohammedanism no essential dogma, outside the vague statement "There is one God and Mohammed is his Prophet," and he shows that this absence of dogma leads to a wide range of beliefs and a resulting universal tolerance (*Religions et Philosophies,* vol. I, chap. I).

(82) "L'histoire pourtant témoigne que, dès les âges les plus reculés, l'Asie a ouvert l'oreille à toutes les assertions du supernaturalisme. On peut comprendre quelle richesse effroyable de théories s'y est produite" (*Ibid.,* vol. I, p. 11).

(83) Gobineau stesses the love of the people for their traditions ("Le peuple en Perse adore ses histoires"), and he shows the incongruity of this reverence for the past with their disregard and even contempt of political forms.

(84) In his introduction to the *Nouvelles Asiatiques* he has given us his reason for writing the tales: "Il m'a paru à propos de ne pas laisser en oubli la bravoure des uns, l'esprit sincèrement romanesque des autres, la bonté native de ceux-ci, la probité foncière de ceux-là; chez tels, la générosité complète, le dévouement, l'affection: chez tous, un laisser-aller incomparable et la tyrannie absolue du premier mouvement, soit qu'il soit bon, soit aussi qu'il soit des pires" (p. 2).

(85) *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1754). Note J. (Hachette ed., vol. I, p. 144).

(86) Gérard de Nerval, to whom Gobineau owes some inspiration, according to Lange (op. cit., p. 125), visited the Orient to study national customs and manners, but, as Du Camp has pointed out (*Souvenirs Littéraires,* 1882 ed., vol. I, p. 421), he was hampered by his ignorance of languages.

the period of Romanticism Oriental exoticism was the result of that nostalgia which was one of the chief elements of the movement. As Romanticism waned, the element of nostalgia in exotic literature grew less and its place was taken by that other important element of Romanticism, the search for local colour. Flaubert accompanied Maxime Du Camp to North Africa where, in the shadow of ancient civilizations, he gathered documentary material for *Salammbô,* just as Chateaubriand, many years previously, had visited Jerusalem because he was going to write *Les Martyrs*. The difference in point of view towards the exotic motif is shown in the journey taken by this author compared with that taken by Renan to the same part of the world. By the time Renan travelled, Oriental exoticism had taken on a more scientific aspect and the author of the *Vie de Jésus* went to the Holy Land for scientific purposes. In other words French Oriental exoticism had developed during the century from the impressionistic, subjective stage to a serious study of local characteristics and differences. The personal element of Romanticism had given way to the element of universality. With Gobineau, as with Renan, we get a return to the exoticism of ideas, which dominated the exoticism of Montesquieu and the "philosophes." Montesquieu, however, was Rousseau's "philosophe qui ne voyage pas" and he had the enormous disadvantage of not getting his material first hand. In the *Esprit des Lois,* Montesquieu, when dealing with "facts" gleaned from classical sources or from the accounts of Jesuit missionaries, is positive, arbitrary, doctrinaire. Gobineau, face to face with the human institutions themselves in their complexity and variety, hesitates to draw conclusions. He limits himself to presenting the facts as he sees them, showing what is essentially different in the two civilizations and stating the conditions which must be removed before these differences can be obliterated.

In its literary aspects, the work of Gobineau, while it is inferior to the magnificent imaginative landscapes of Chateaubriand and to the lyric prose of Loti and other modern exotic writers, is sustained by a fertile poetic imagination and a sympathy which freshens and vivifies his style. His pictures of Oriental love in the *Nouvelles Asiatiques,* his account of Babism and of the *tekyèh* in *Religions et Philosophies,* his descriptions of Oriental landscapes in *Trois Ans en Asie,* while they lack the advantage of the sensuous, colourful prose which is the chief element of the treatment of the Orient in modern literature, glow with a more intellectual but no less lyric quality.

The element of mystical exaltation, which we have noticed, generally prevents the scholar from stifling the artist entirely.

Gobineau's Oriental writings show no desire for romance. He sought in each land that he visited, not the colour of its cities, not the artistic beauty of its landscapes, not the sensuousness of its tropical air, but the secret of its spirit.

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Gobineau's work as an historian and an Orientalist is shaped and guided by his ethnological ideas. In *La Renaissance* this influence is shown in the form of the work. Its greatest literary merit, however, lies in the fact that, more than in any other work, the author has succeeded in keeping his ideas in the background and has centered his interest on the human element in his main characters. In this way he has succeeded in vitalizing history.

In the *Histoire des Perses,* on the other hand, it is the Gobineau of the Essay who prevails. The work of the historian is hampered by the theory of decadence. In addition it is subject to certain irrational ideas concerning the treatment of history, ideas which sprang from a source to which Gobineau went for a greater part of his material. These ideas involve a type of impressionism which verges on mysticism. The element of mysticism in the historical or scientific work of Gobineau is best seen in his work on the cuneiform characters. Here it appears as a belief in cabbalistic formulae, by which he interprets texts that had elsewhere received fairly satisfactory explanation of a scientific nature. In his historical work, then, Gobineau shows himself often doctrinaire, often impressionistic, sometimes even mystical, in his point of view.

The Oriental works bring out his gifts as an interpreter and observer. In the *Trois Ans en Asie,* the ethnologist in Gobineau, though it does reappear from time to time, is subjected to his skill as an observer of social phenomena and to his talents as an interpreter of the fine distinctions of the human mind. This ability to weigh human motives and desires is given practical opportunity to show itself in *Les Religions et Philosophies,* when Gobineau undertakes to describe the rise and fall of Babism. The effectiveness of this description is largely due to the fact that Gobineau is dealing not with theories or second-hand historical data but with living facts. In the chapters dealing with general ideas he has shown that he is

able to combine with these powers of analysis a gift for synthesis. He proves his ability not only to assemble facts, but to group them, and from them to produce conclusions which are not only accurate but which are illuminating in their description of racial differences.

In *La Renaissance* it is the artist in Gobineau that is predominant: in *Trois Ans en Asie* and *Les Religions et Philosophies* it is the observer; in the *Histoire des Perses* and the works on the cuneiform characters it is Gobineau the scholar. It is significant that these works have met with praise in the order stated. This would seem to imply that in the role of historian Gobineau was first an artist, secondly an observer, and lastly a scholar. This judgment regarding his powers of erudition, at any rate, is probably definitive.

CHAPTER IV

GOBINEAU AS A POET AND LITERARY ARTIST

One of the striking things about the voluminous correspondence of Gobineau is that, though it abounds in facts and observations of the greatest interest, it contains remarkably little in the way of literary criticism or comments on the literary movements of his time. His diplomatic career necessitated long periods abroad and was chiefly responsible for this dissociation from the literary opinions of the capital. So that, in order to get an idea of his literary theories, we have to go to that period of his life when he was earning his living as a writer. We find in the pages of *Commerce, La Revue Nouvelle* and *La Quotidienne* a number of his articles which tell us his theories concerning literary matters.

It is obvious that Gobineau was a critic of more than common merit. Reading his judgments of his contemporaries, at a distance of nearly a century, one is struck by their fundamental soundness. He seems to have had the rare faculty of being able to discriminate between the chaff and the grain. When he uses superlative praise, it is generally of a man whom posterity has since placed safely in the first rank. Thus, of Sainte-Beuve he says: "Il est donc incontestablement le critique le plus fin que nous possédons" (1); of Balzac (in an article in which he condemns two of Balzac's inferior works) (2): "M. de Balzac, avec ses erreurs, n'en reste pas moins une des plus grandes organisations de ce temps-ci"; and at the same

(1) "Sur quelques critiques contemporains," *La Quotidienne*, Dec. 1, 1846.
(2) *Commerce*, N° 303, 1844.

period (1845) he praises the then almost unknown works of Stendhal. In a series of articles on contemporary critics published in the *Quotidienne* (3) he gives his own views on criticism. He condemns destructive, carping criticism, considering that a bad critic is as bad a menace to literature as a bad writer and he attacks the intolerance and invective of Gustave Planche as well as the humouristic, impressionistic criticism of Jules Janin. He praises the good taste of Villemain and his practice of occupying himself with the best and he condemns the habit of Sainte-Beuve of dealing with second and even third-class writers. In short, Gobineau insists on the high role of the critic. He demands of him a universal view-point, tolerant, impersonal, constructive, with a preoccupation for the highest in art and literature. Although shut out from the sympathy of Sainte-Beuve by his aristocratic prejudices, he has that writer's broad erudition, his powers of observation and his great curiosity, and these gifts would undoubtedly have carried him far above the level of the contemporary critics whom he condemned.

The opinions of Gobineau expressed at this time are of interest because they appear to be those which more or less dominated his later literary work. Historically, he came at a period when the reaction against Romanticism was beginning to be felt in France. In this respect he was in line with the younger spirits of his age. He praised the Romantic writers for their destruction of old literary superstitions and for their enrichment of the language. (4) He recognized the justice of their theory that art has to do with the ugly as well as the sublime, but he condemned them for lacking in measure and discernment in the way they applied this principle. He blamed the Romantic writers for their inordinate egoism; for hang-

(3) Op. cit., articles on Villemain, G. Planche, Sainte-Beuve, Saint-Marc Girardin, Jules Janin, C. Magnin, Nov. 11-Dec. 25, 1846.

(4) "Une littérature est-elle possible?" *La Revue Nouvelle*, May-June 1845, pp. 116, 122. In a long essay on Alfred de Musset in *Commerce* (No. 268, 1845), Gobineau praises that author's gifts as a poet, but criticises his treatment of passion. He accuses him of uncertainty of thought and lack of invention ("tous ses poèmes reproduisent les mêmes points de vue"). In Musset's women he finds "une créature faible et décevante sur laquelle on ne peut compter" and in the men "l'égoïsme le plus absolu et la sécheresse de cœur la plus complète." Musset, he concludes, has never grown up. "Son grand malheur est d'être toujours resté à quinze ans." The critic was even more severe on Théophile Gautier. He sees in his own election to the Academy a blow to the aspirations of "Théophile Gautier et compagnie" (letter of July 1870 to his father). Nine years later we find the emperor Dom Pedro writing him: "Heureusement Gautier est mort" (letter of Oct. 27, 1879). The Romantic writer for whom he seems to have had the greatest liking was George Sand (*La Revue Nouvelle*, II, 130).

ing out the dirty linen of their passions, making it possible to bewail the falseness of a mistress through two volumes of prose. This, he says, is essentially false since "les chagrins amoureux ont pour compagne inséparable la pudeur." (5) He accuses them of misusing the Middle Ages to such an extent that they had made it a subject unfit for literature for some time to come. (6) But he blames them chiefly for their lack of attention to form, for their idea that the poet is a natural artist, above the rules of composition, listening only to "la voix inculte de sa nature." (7) The result is, he says, that they have not only failed to evolve any literary system, but have exhausted all literary subjects—("non seulement vous n'avez plus de code, vous n'avez plus de sujets à traiter").

Gobineau was out of tune with the egoistic exaggerations of romanticism, but he was equally unsympathetic to that tendency which appeared as a reaction against the doctrines of this school, the objectivity of the "l'art pour l'art" theory. He looked with suspicion on the feverish search for the "epithet" shown by some of the writers of his time, which made them invest inanimate objects with what they called "caractère." Better, he says, go to nature like Delille than put yourself below the level of that writer by relying upon inanimate objects to explain the atmosphere of a situation. Here the keen psychology of Gobineau came into conflict with the false psychology which was behind this movement and which had its roots in impressionism, a point of view to which the mind of Gobineau was naturally hostile. (8)

He also ridiculed the exaggerated use of the technical word used for the purpose of creating local colour, finding only a mediocre pleasure in the description of a feast where the women are "vêtues de conopeum et de calasiris" and the guests are served "des langues de phénicoptères et des foies de scarrons."

He further disbelieved in that doctrine so widely spread by the Parnassian and symbolist schools, that there is a vital relation between the arts, making possible a common method of approach. In his article on Théophile Gautier he denies the truth of this idea: "faire un tableau, produire un livre, ce sont des résultats bien différents." (9)

(5) *Commerce*, article on Alfred de Musset, Sept. 24, 1844.
(6) *La Nouvelle Revue*, III, 107.
(7) *Ibid.*, IV, 127.
(8) *Commerce*, Oct. 15, 1844.
(9) *Ibid.*

One of the things which distinguished Gobineau from the Romantic school was his belief in the necessity of fixed laws. In his article entitled "Les buts techniques de la littérature" (10) he has stated what these laws should be. He sees in literature five fundamental elements: Energy, Grace, Gaiety, Beauty and Austerity. Gaiety, he says, will not mingle with the other elements, except, perhaps, with Grace, which has a wonderful power of linking itself with other elements without effacing their different qualities. Grace, he asserts, is a sort of free Beauty. (11) His fifth virtue, Austerity, he includes with misgivings. With a typical nonchalance, he explains that he has added it only because of the claim of the Catholic Church that literature should have "une sorte d'entrée dans les régions intellectuelles les plus abstraites." Gobineau would undoubtedly have disagreed with Matthew Arnold in making "high seriousness" the vital factor in Greek literature, and in modern literature he considered it to be almost an anachronism. It should be merely an assistant to energy, a "repoussoir d'une grande puissance," certainly, but one to be used with the greatest care. The most important of this list of desiderata is Energy:

> Il est bon qu'elle règne seule; il faut qu'elle domine, et soit seule pour se déployer dans sa pleine puissance et produire ses plus beaux effets (12).

He gets his authority for this exaltation of energy from the classics. The Greeks, he says, were never afraid of displaying violence in their works and in his essay on Saint-Marc Girardin he opposes that critic's theory that the classical dramatists avoided violent passions. (13) The effect of energy on the mind of the reader will be that it will hold it at a tension, a condition which is tiring and therefore conducive to short works of art. (Gobineau himself seldom put the theory into pratice.) This fatigue, however, is itself a proof of excellence in literary works, for those works which only tickle the mind ("chatouiller l'esprit") of the reader are not of the highest rank. This exaltation of Energy is interesting, because. of all the qualities which he has enunciated in his criticism, it is the one which he has most consistently used. Austerity he has generally ignored, except when it appeared as a kind of aristocratic sobriety.

(10) *La Revue Nouvelle*, III, 109 ff.
(11) *Ibid.*, p. 117.
(12) *Ibid.*, p. 111.
(13) *La Quotidienne*, Dec. 25, 1844.

Gaiety he indulges in to a limited extent, generally modified and distorted by bitterness, producing irony. Grace and Beauty appear in his works when his intensely logical mind is touched by the imagination of the artist, but energy is omnipresent, whatever be the genre or the nature of the work.

Temperamentally Gobineau was much more a classicist than a romanticist (14). His classicism, however, dit not show itself in a blind worship of the aesthetics of Greece. This is probably the reason why he opposes the hellenism of André Chénier (a man who had the typically Gobinist trait of being able to communicate and interpret the soul of another civilization). Gobineau accuses him of gaining his impression of Greece purely from classic authors like Theocritus (15). He condemns him for giving the false impression that the Greek woman was a chattel in the hands of her husband, in the same way that he blames de Musset for misinterpreting Hellas and Saint-Marc Girardin for asserting that violence was lacking in the Greek drama (16). He advocates the studying of Greek models not for the purpose of reproducing Greek forms but for learning the secret of the perfection in Greek life. In other words he would have classical scholars apply to Greek studies the same methods and point of view that Renan applied in his study of Christianity.

Gobineau saw in the Greek ideals a fundamental humanism which preached that the study of mankind is Man. (17) Their classics teach us, he says:

> ... « que la beauté suprême, comme la diversité, réside surtout dans l'Homme, que toutes les modifications des temps, des mœurs, du culte, n'ajoutent à cette beauté ni n'en retranchent; que pour l'art l'homme ne cessera jamais d'être neuf et que, comme tel, il est éternellement beau. » (18)

(14) Gobineau was a lover of the Greek dramatists, particularly of Aeschylus, whom he placed before Euripides, just as he placed Corneille above Racine ("Pauvre vieux Corneille! avec tes incorrections, tu n'en es pas moins, avec Molière, le plus grand des poètes dramatiques que nous ayons enfantés", letter to his sister, June 30, 1840). Even Euripides is "à cent pieds au-dessus des modernes" (letter of June 5, 1863, cited by Schemann, *Quellen*, II, 374). On the other hand he condemns Plutarch ("l'abbé Plutarque") for his "portraits sans ressemblance d'une bande d'intrigants".

(15) *Commerce*, Oct. 1844.

(16) *La Quotidienne*, Dec. 2, 1846.

(17) For this reason he condemns Saint Augustine ("une espèce de J.-J. Rousseau, et je déteste les girouettes" (letter to his wife, Oct. 8, 1869, cited by Schemann, *Quellen* II, 374) and Boëtius for creating a human nature which never existed and drawing conclusions from facts which no one has ever experienced.

(18) *La Nouvelle Revue*, III, 113.

This brings us to the centre of his thinking as indicated in these earlier articles. Gobineau was a classicist in his belief in the quality of restraint, in his sense of objectivity in literature, in his insistence on the necessity of rules and form. He felt, however, that modern literature had pushed itself beyond the confines of classical rules:

> L'antiquité est désormais trop lointaine pour nous enthousiasmer encore. (19)

In addition to certain constant principles he finds in modern life, with its complexity, elements which are new. Modern science demands modern methods in literature.

> Les faits de ce monde attendent que le poète vienne les enlever à la poussière, les dégager de leur écorce et leur donner la splendeur. (20)

In their recognition of the importance of the Fact, his doctrines approach the tenets of Positivism. Gobineau rejects the supernatural as a literary theme. He attacks the theory that religion and art have anything in common:

> La terre, la terre que je prends des deux mains, enfantera désormais et nos terreurs et notre espoir et notre joie. (21)

The marvellous has no place in art and a work which relies upon this element is, he asserts, no longer a serious work. This point of view is thoroughly unclassical and it shows us that side of Gobineau which was in accord with his time. Gobineau would undoubtedly have been unwilling to accept the extreme doctrines of Leconte de Lisle and the impassive school, but he had a sufficient reverence for the objective fact to show that he was in sympathy with the fundamental doctrines of *scientisme*.

In short Gobineau rejected the doctrines of romanticism and went beyond the rules of classicism. He was fundamentally a humanist. He believed that the function of the literary artist is to study all that pertains to the nature of man. He was a humanist, too, in the breadth of his interests and in the universality of his point of view. This humanism kept him out of the literary schools of his time, which were dominated by narrower creeds than he would have accepted. It made him an isolated figure, but it placed him with Renan, with Mérimée, with Anatole France and other great humanists of the nineteenth century in France.

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(19) *Ibid.*
(20) *Ibid.*, p. 97.
(21) *Ibid.*, p. 107.

When we come to examine Gobineau's poetry we find that he did not always put his theories into pratice. In an early letter to his sister he expressed the opinion that poetry and politics are the only subjects fit for the pen of a gentleman journalist. (22) Long before he was writing political articles for Paris journals, however, he had turned his attention to poetry. Of his early verse his sister, always a most lenient critic, says: "Les vers qu'il faisait avec facilité étaient médiocres de forme et d'expression et plus tard il les dédaigna complètement, lorsque son talent se fut développé." (23) These early poems were written after the style of the Romantic school. They show the influence of V. Hugo and the romanticists, particularly in their attempt to experiment with new verse forms, a habit which Gobineau retained in his later poetry.

The poet of *Amadis,* however, soon gave up the short lyric. His Muse was more ambitious and sought wider fields. The most striking characteristic of Gobineau's poetry is his choice of subjects. He used the poetic form to express his ideas on history, to communicate his enormous interest in the problems of peoples and the pictures of historic periods. His poems are for the greater part, then, either psychological or historical. (24) In the volume entitled

(22) MS. 3518.

(23) MS. 3537. His father had preserved what he calls "Premiers vers d'Arthur en 1852", two poems entitled *L'Algonquin* and *Jumière* which show this same influence. Thus, in the first stanza of the former :

Quelle est la forme qui glisse,
Qui s'éclipse
Au milieu de noirs rochers?
Qui sur la liane s'élance
Se balance,
Sur la cime des palmiers?
Qui cache dans le feuillage
Son visage
Pour surprendre l'ennemi?
Qui descend et qui vogue,
En pirogue
Sur le beau lac endormi ?...
Mais au brillant arc-en-ciel
Bleu vermeil
Qui se joue sur son sein
A ces plumes transparentes
Et brillantes,
Comme un soleil au matin
A ses flèches scintillantes
Et menaçantes
Je reconnais l'Algonquin...

(24) The poetic work of Gobineau includes two long epic poems : *Amadis* (published posthumously, unfinished) and *Le Paradis de Béowulf* (unpublished, written 1870),

l'Aphroëssa (with the exception of the introductory poem and two poems of light fantasy: *La Petite Chanson* and *Le Carnaval de Venise*) the subjects are grandiose ones. (25) His first published poem, *La Chronique rimée de Jean Chouan,* is an attempt to picture the psychology of political revolt against overwhelming odds.

This desire to paint on a large canvas leads Gobineau to indulge in vast syntheses in which subject and form are subordinated to a desire for expression, so that the poem becomes a kind of container for his ideas. This epic form he has used most consciously in *Amadis* (26) and *Le Paradis de Béowulf.*

The former is a poem of almost 15,000 lines. The Amadis of the first part is the typical knight of the Spanish novel of chivalry, bound by an ideal love to Oriane. He and his knights ride abroad on perilous adventures and the powers of darkness are soon plotting against him. These are represented by Viviane, the infatuated Merlin, Theophrastus (who stands for mediocrity in royalty) and Barrabas, the demagogue turned king. These figures lead "la boue" (the people). As the poem continues, the final victory of the forces

A Volume of verse entitled *l'Aphroëssa* (Paris 1869),

A narrative poem of the Vendean revolt: *Chronique rimée de Jean Chouan et de ses compagnons* (Paris and Leipzig, 1856),

Dilfilza, a Persian poem, dedicated to Amélie Laigneau (unpublished and undated),

Olaf Tryggvason, a narrative poem of the Norsemen (unpublished and undated),

Manfredine, a Byronic theme dealing with Italian descendants of the Norsemen (unpublished and dated 1838 to 1849),

La Guerre de Chiozza, a narrative of Italy (written late in life and dedicated to Countess de la Tour), besides several fragments and early poems. Schemann has published parts of some of these poems in his *Quellen.*

(25) *Brennus* deals with the sack of Rome by a Gaulish warrior and his mystical change of heart, resulting in retirement to an ascetic life. *L'Achilléide* is the story of Achilles' choice of the *summum bonum*: a short life of glorious strife, rather than a long inactive one. *Geneviève de Brabant* is a Gothic legend. *Le Cartulaire de Saint Avil* is a series of cantos dealing with the different periods of the Christian church in Europe. *Samson* is the epic of the Hebrew hero, his fall and vengeance. Of the other two poems, *La Petite Chanson* is a slight poem of fantasy and *Le Carnaval de Venise* an attempt to reproduce the atmosphere of the Carnival in a series of scenes.

(26) We have already discussed Gobineau's point of view in the poem (chap.: "Gobineau, aristocrat"). Like *Béowulf,* the poem shows the influence of Dante. Like the *Divine Comedy* it is divided into three equal parts. In its reference to men and events it reminds us of the Dante poem. If we wished to carry the comparison futher, we could find a similarity in the idea of spiritual progress: Amadis goes from physical defeat to spiritual victory.

of evil becomes clearer. Gobineau, in abusive language, describes all the shortcomings of the rule of the people. As the sea of "mud" rises, the figure of Amadis becomes more ethereal and the poem ends on a mystic note. The mob has taken possession of the earth and Amadis, representing the élite, is transferred to a higher realm.

> Il conservait l'Honneur, l'Amour et Liberté
> Et garde au sein du Dieu son immortalité.

The poem is full of unpoetic passages, of dreary descriptions and conversation, where the art of the poet, though often sustained by a vivid imagination and by a certain effect of epic grandeur, is on the whole wasted in a mass of unpoetic material. Another weakness of the work lies in the ending. The problem arises: What is to become of the hero in a world where all is corruption? He cannot die like Roland at Roncevaux because, by the end of the poem, he has become a type rather than an individual. The poet cuts the Gordian knot by translating him to a higher world and, in so doing, he has merely used immortality as a convenient way to end the poem. But the greatest weakness of the work lies in its conception. The author has tried to write a long ideological poem, a task which can be achieved only by the use of unusual poetic powers, by a mastery of form and technique which, in spite of his really poetic imagination, Gobineau did not possess.

The *Amadis,* in spite of its shortcomings, has the advantage of a unity of plan, arising from the single idea of decadence which is the inspiration of the poem. The other long poem of Gobineau, *Le Paradis de Béowulf,* (27) does not even possess this advantage. The poem is a huge synthesis of the kind that Flaubert attempted in *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine.* There is the same lavish display of erudition, the same crowding of the scene with characters of all descriptions, the same philosophical incentive behind it. There are two important differences, however. Gobineau's object seems to be the opposite of Flaubert's (who in his work evidently desired to show the futility of all religious systems). The lesson of *Béowulf* is

(27) The poem has not been published, although Schemann gives a number of passages in the *Quellen* (vol. II, pp. 5 ff.). There are two MSS. of the work: Strasbourg MS. 5301 and Bibliothèque Nationale, Fr. Nouv. Acq. 20103. The Strasbourg MS. contains an added chapter (XI) which was added in Paris in June 1871. The original title was intended to be *La Vision de Frère Médard bénédictin.* This was changed in the Paris MS. to *La Vision d'Angilbert* and later to the present title.

constructive rather than destructive. If there is a main idea in the poem, it is probably the immortality of all products of the mind, of the imagination or of the spirit. Furthermore Gobineau, strange to say, has in this work rejected the race for the individual, while Flaubert deals chiefly in ideas expressed by the mass, the race or the sect. This difference gives the advantage to the poet, since it gives him the poetic inspiration arising from the emotion of the individual, which cannot be found in the mass. The finest parts of *Béowulf* are those which deal with the emotions of single figures, such as the nun of Beja, Mary Magdelene, or Don Juan.

The poet takes the title from the Anglo-Saxon epic (28), but the inspiration of the poem is undoubtedly to be found in Dante. The poem was written at Rio de Janeiro, where Gobineau had been introduced by the emperor Dom Pedro to Longfellow's translation of the *Divine Comedy,* which had impressed him greatly. (29) The general atmosphere of the poem is taken from Dante. The Anglo-Saxon poet visits the abode of departed spirits, who tell him of their experiences. Gobineau is more objective than his model. There are none of the personal allusions that we find in the *Divine Comedy,* but one can scarcely turn a page of the manuscript without recognizing some debt to the Italian epic. The influence of Dante is shown in descriptive passages like the following description of J. Cornelius Sylla:

> Je regardai cet homme en face
> Et je frissonnai malgré moi.
> Son front poli semblait de glace
> Et ses yeux fiers dardaient l'effroi ;
> Il avait la lèvre serrée
> Et fine sous un nez crochu
> Qui rappelait le bec de l'aigle.
> Il marchait droit comme une règle.
> Il était grand, maigre et velu.

And his pictures of the beauty of passion, his descriptions of Dona Ana, of Sapho and Mary Magdelene inevitably remind us of the Paolo and Francesca incident in the same poem. On the other hand Gobineau's poem, unlike Dante's, is non-christian, though philosophical.

The poem opens with a description of the dissolving of the universe. Matter has disappeared and only the things of the mind and

(28) Gobineau had read the Anglo-Saxon epic in Kemble's edition (see *Essai,* II, 399).

(29) MS. 3522. Letter of April 1, 1869.

spirit remain. In this disembodied universe live only the élite. The "mud" has disappeared. Béowulf joins the procession of disembodied heroes and converses with them in turn. Some of them are abstract personifications. Error is there protecting her feeble sister Truth. Literary creations are there also: Don Juan, Gil Blas and others, and the poet learns that they are as important in the world of spirits as actual people. Most of the figures, however, are men and women who have actually lived: Dante himself, Cornelius Sylla, Hereward the Wake, Cyrus, Alcibiades, and others. A large number of them are women: Marian, the nun of Beja, who preaches Tenderness; Sapho, who tells of the joys of renunciation; Priscilla, who speaks of the spiritual satisfaction of religion, and Hypatia, "la dernière payenne," who glorifies pagan life. Into the midst of this paradise of the intellect burst a band of bloody Merovingian warriors to sanctify Gobineau's theory of violence and we are introduced, too, to Colomban and his companions, who represent spiritual violence.

Towards the end of the poem the author seems to lose control of his subject and the stage is filled with crowds of Sybils, Saints, Prophets, Dactyls of Crete and Corybantes of Ida, dancers of Syria, Egyptians and Nereids. Apparently these hordes represent the unsual, the exceptional in humanity who from time immemorial have been persecuted and condemned (30). Time disappears and only Beauty remains. Alaric comes with his golden arrows and the three disappear into the ether, starting on new quests.

Here, as in *Amadis,* there is no real ending to the poem. The imagination of the poet has sustained him through the work, but it has not reached any logical ending to give the poem an artistic unity. The poem is, however, full of striking images and ideas. Apart from the language used, the treatment is thoroughly poetical in its atmosphere, and in certain passages, such, for example, as his description of Error and Truth. The speeches of Hypatia or

(30) Ausbert, who has joined his brother Béowulf, says:

Notre univers était plein d'êtres
Pour qui les ordinaires lois
N'existaient pas, et nos ancêtres
Et nos enfants, tout d'une voix,
Aveugles autant que nous-mêmes
Ont accueilli par des blasphèmes,
Insulté les instincts divins
De ces exceptions sublimes
Qui planaient au-dessus des cimes
Quand nous rampions dans les ravins.

(Chant XI)

Don Juan's account of his punishment are of high lyrical power, a lyricism not of form but of concentrated emotion. As regards ideas, the author uses the poem to express his belief in the immortality of the products of the spirit. He speaks of the necessity of Error as a servant to Truth. He discusses the importance of the Absolute as opposed to the Relative in Idealism and the ennobling effect of Love of all kinds. He upholds the pagan idea of Justice as opposed to the Christian idea of Mercy. (31)

Béowulf is typical of Gobineau's poetic art because it shows his love of large subjects, and also the combination of ideas and emotions, or rather ideas tempered and vivified by emotion, which was a peculiar trait of the poet. In its emotional power the poem is superior to *Amadis,* chiefly, probably, because the author is treating an idealized subject, the glory of the intellect. In *Amadis* the main thought, in spite of the central figure, is that of decadence, scarcely a lyrical subject. (32)

The style of Gobineau as a poet is dominated by that quality which he praised as the most important in literature, namely Energy. The subjects he treats most successfully are those of action. Such a subject he found in *Olaf Tryggvason.* The poem begins with a song in praise of the joy of living which shows the verve of Gobineau's style:

> La vie : un rude emportement,
> Un besoin d'agir et de poindre;
> Une passion d'entreprendre
> Nous versaient leur enivrement.
> Nos pieds ne touchaient pas la terre:
> Ils la poussaient pour avancer ;
> Nous aurions voulu nous lancer
> Vers le plus haut de l'atmosphère ;
> Nous aurions voulu devancer
> Les emportements du tonnerre,
> Marcher tout droit, courir, passer,
> En avant, jamais en arrière,
> C'est là ce que nous demandions
> Voilà ce que nous entendions
> Et nous allions criant carrière. (33)

The poem describes the adventures of fourteen Norse ships and their fortunes as pirates on the high seas. They attack and defeat five big

(31) Here, as we shall see clowhere, he anticipates the anti-christian ideas of Nietzsche.

(32) It might be pointed out that even this subject, in the hands of a poetic artist, could be given a lyric note. A comparison of Tennyson's "Last Tournament" (*Idylls of the King*), picturing a similar situation, with the last parts of *Amadis* shows by how much Gobineau missed being a poet, and why.

ships and after the battle, on the decks heaped with the slain, the victors, in a kind of ecstasy of energy, celebrate their victory:

Et les morts couchés dans leur gloire,
Rouges de sang, couvraient le pont,
Quelle auréole sur leurs fronts!
Je les voyais avec envie....
Ils avaient remporté la vie,
La vie immortelle à toujours.

Then follows another description of bloody fighting, filled with the lust to kill. The hero falls overboard and after peril of death in the sea is finally rescued by Olaf Tryggvason, the leader whom he has been seeking. (33 a) The theme is that of the early part of the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl,* but here the writer has a form better fitted to his subject. The short lines, permitting abrupt phrases, very well express the rapid action, the breathless intensity of the fight, the violence of the fighters.

There is always something of the grandiose in this Gobinist conception of energy. When the author attempts to display energy deprived of this element, he fails. In the *Chronique rimée de Jean*

(33) In reading Gobineau's works we are often reminded of the poetry of the English poet Browning. The joy of living here expressed (which Gobineau has made one of the characteristics of his Northern Aryan) finds a less energetic but more poetical expression in *Saul,* in the lines beginning: "Oh! the wild joy of living!"

In point of style there is a striking similarity between the two, particularly in their discursiveness, although Gobineau's Gallic quality of clearness frees him from the reproach of obscurity generally levelled at the English poet. In point of subject matter the comparison is even more striking. Browning had that absorbing interest in history which we find in Gobineau. Like the French writer he dipped into all periods and countries for his material (see, for example, Karl Schmidt : *Robert Brownings Verhältnis zu Frankreich,* Berlin, 1909, for his debt to French literature), and both writers had the gift of seizing the psychological elements in an historic period or event. Gobineau's treatment of the Renaissance reminds us of Browning's poems, as, for example, *The Bishop orders his Tomb And Andrea del Sarto. Did* Browning influence Gobineau at all? The question is hard to decide, in the absence of definite proof. We know, however, that Gobineau did read some of Browning's poems. Among the Gobineau MSS. at Strasbourg is a poem in Gobineau's handwriting, without date or title, which is a translation of Browning's "Confessions" (*Dramatis Personae,* London, 1865). Schemann includes this poem in the *Quellen* without recognition. It is probably to this poem that Lytton refers in his letter of Sept. 12, 1865: ...and first let me tell you (Lytton is quoting from a letter received by him from John Forster) that Browning had the translation of the verses from me, was greatly pleased by it and said he would say as much to you" (Strasbourg MS. 3527). Browning was in Paris in 1855, in 1858, and again, in France, in 1861 and 1865, but there is no evidence that he met Gobineau (see: *Rev. de Litt. comparée,* Juillet-Septembre 1926: "Robert Browning et Gobineau").

(33 a) For a discussion of the probable source of *Olaf Tryggvason,* see above.

Chouan he has tried to describe the revolt of the peasants against the Revolution. and has given his poem the form of the ballad. The result is a work which almost entirely lacks the poetic appeal. Gobineau has failed to catch the simplicity of the ballad form, that absence of conscious art which gives to this genre its unique charm. The poem should have stopped at about the middle, the death of Jean Chouan, in order to preserve its artistic unity. It is successful in picturing the psychology of revolt, the tragedy of fighting against overwhelming odds, but it fails as a poem because it lacks unity and simplicity, because it tries to relate two opposing elements, the ballad style and a philosophic treatment.

Gobineau is essentially a poet of substance rather than of form. He is interested in the sweep of historical periods or in the influence of the superman on his time. These furnish his two favourite topics. Of the former theme a good example is *Le Cartulaire de Saint-Avil.* This poem is a series of etchings the subject of which is the Church in the different phases of its development. Each picture presents in a few lines a dominant characteristic of the time, the priest's pride in his church in the Middle Ages or the salon abbé of the eighteenth century. As each phase is pictured with the idea of giving a single effect, the poem is much more successful than some of his other works, where the poet is lost in the immensity of his subject, and the keenness of the poet's historic vision adds a certain interest to the work. A type of the second form of subject is the poem "Samson" (in *l'Aphroëssa*), where Gobineau, in a poem of 6,000 alexandrines, tells the story of the rise and fall of the Hebrew leader, his betrayal and death. Here, as elsewhere, the chief merit of the poem lies in the success with which the poet has communicated the rough, virile, elemental life of a primitive age. Samson is a vital character and not a mere legendary hero. The author has been successful in giving to the poem a sense of reality. (34)

When he attempts lighter subjects, Gobineau is not successful. *Ma Petite Chanson* is of this nature, but it misses the lightness of fantasy both in movement and language. As for *Le Carnaval de Venise,* one has only to imagine what a de Musset could have done with the same subject to admit of the justice of a recent criticism

(34) In the same way his poem *Dilfiza* is successful in giving the exotic atmosphere of Persia.

that the poem is extremely wearisome. (35) Gobineau in his prose has at times been able to strike the note of light fantasy and delicate raillery, (36) but in his poems, with very rare exceptions, he has failed. It would seem as if his faculty of observation, his desire to present the reality of a situation, placed such a burden of thought upon the poet that he was unable to give the poem the light form it required.

It is not that he entirely lacked the gifts of the poet. He had a sense of rhythm which showed itself in short lyrics, as, for example, the following lines in *Amadis:*

Monastère, monastère,
Versets, répons et prière,
Cloche allant
Et battant
Et sonnant au campanile,
Ne font pas le cœur tranquille. (37)

At times his emotion shows itself in really poetical lines, as in the following description of Kachemyze in *Dilfiza:*

Alors, je te cherchais aux lueurs des étoiles,
Toi, comme une épousée, ouvrant un peu tes voiles,
Tu découvrais à peine un dôme, un frais jardin,
Et l'ombre en retombant t'enveloppait soudain.

He also has a certain gift of colour, not the suggestive colouring of the symbolist, but rather the classic application of colour in description. The poem *Dilfiza* is full of colour. The same gift is shown in such lines as the following description of the Heavenly Dawn in *Le Paradis de Béowulf:*

Une lueur, blanche, azurée,
Rose, vibrant et conquérant,
La sphère au soleil consacrée
Se répandit sur l'Empyrée
Comme une eau qui gonfle en courant.

(35) André Thérive: "Gobineau Poète" (*Revue Universelle,* April-June, 1922).

(36) His correspondence with Adolphe Franck furnishes excellent examples of Gobineau's ability to write this type of prose (*Lettres inédites du Comte de Gobineau à M. Adolphe Franck et à sa famille,* ed. by René Worms, Paris, 1916).

(37) *Amadis,* livre II, chant 1 (p. 161). Gobineau also possessed a gift of invention in rhyme. This shows itself particularly in *Amadis.* In a passage taken at random we find the following rhymes: ababcdcdeefggf, with 12, 8, 12, 8, 12, 8, 12, 3, 8, 4, 12 and 8 syllables (p. 145). His favourite form was the short line, probably because it expressed better the quality of energy. *Amadis* is written in about half alexandrines and half octosyllabics and shorter lines. *Béowulf* and *Olaf Tryggvason* are written entirely in octosyllabics.

C'était un écrin d'améthystes
Qui, sous des filets de rubis,
Éveillant des teintes moins tristes
Chatoyait à mes yeux ravis.
C'était l'or fin et les topazes
Et les reflets des diamants
Aux vivaces scintillements... (38)

This accumulation of colour is not, of course, essentially poetic, for it is as effective when used in prose. (39)

There is also an element of emotion in his poems. As we have seen, Gobineau possessed a type of imagination which caused him to live with his characters, to project himself into the historical periods he wished to describe. He had the power of emotionalizing them just as the romantic school of Lamartine had the power of emotionalizing the landscape. It is this power which gives poetic qualities to parts of his poems. It gives a lyric tone to the love of Amadis and Oriana and, in *Béowulf,* to the figures of Priscilla, of Don Juan, of Dona Ana and others. This emotionalizing factor is sometimes present even in the exposition of ideas. The description of Error and Truth in the same poem is a striking example of this vitalized ideology of the poet. Indeed, the chief poetic value of Gobineau's long works consists of this type of exultation which arises from the thoughts of the poet. It is in this imaginative quality that Gobineau, the thinker, approaches nearest to being a poet.

Gobineau was above all things an observer. He condemned Romanticism for its insistence on the personal factor, and his criticism was to a very large extent just, for a literature which killed itself through an excess of egoism. Nevertheless, there is a wide and legitimate part of poetry which not only permits, but demands that the poet be personal. The lyric at its best is subjective.

(38) Chap. VI.

(39) The value of Gobineau's poetry, as compared with his prose, is well suggested by a comparison of the above lines with the following passage from *Akrivie Phrangopoulos* (p. 52), where he is describing the landscape of the isle of Naxos:

« La mer, calme d'un calme profond, bleue comme une pervenche, non ridée mais plissée coquettement pour faire miroiter sur son sein les faisceaux de la jeune lumière ruisselant d'en haut en cascades étincelantes, allait chercher bien loin au bout de l'horizon oriental ce qui restait des nuances délicates du crépuscule du matin. Elle se teignait à plaisir et dans un cercle de plus en plus large de cette pluie de fleurs safranées ou d'un rose pâle, et peu à peu le safran devint orange, le rose se parsema d'écarlate, des filons d'or coururent de toutes parts et une clarté éblouissante, chaude, dominatrice, électrisa la nature entière. »

Here, except in the matter of rhyme, the verse has little advantage over the prose, the means of description used and the language being the same.

In it the poet tells of his own experiences and the poem is successful in so far as these experiences reflect the common experiences of man. To this type of poetry Gobineau turned a deaf ear. By temperament he was essentially objective, as all men who live chiefly for their ideas are objective.

It is possible, however, to write objective poetry of a high character, as the poets of the post-Romantic period in France have proved, and in limiting himself to this type of poetry Gobineau did not shut himself off from all sources of poetic inspiration. Leconte de Lisle wrote of the religions of the world, as did Gobineau, and Heredia's muse wandered in many countries and periods, and yet their works bear the stamp of poetic genius. These poets, however, had learned the value of the word as a symbol, as Gobineau never did. What was lacking in the poet of *Amadis* was the feeling for selection and concentration, which is the very essence of poetry. For the most part he built his poetic line as he built his prose phrase, by adding word on word, making each bear its normal weight of meaning and no more. He overlooked the power of suggestion in the poetic symbol. Condemning the use of the epithet in prose, he overlooked the fact that the concentration of thought which such a method implies is to a very large extent necessary in poetry.

For this reason the greatest fault of Gobineau's poetry is its banality. What could be more unpoetic, for example, than the following couplet from *Manfredine* (he is speaking of the meeting of the lovers):

> Et si l'on eût pu lire en leurs cœurs à tous deux,
> On n'eût pas distingué lequel aimait le mieux...

It is the language of everyday prose, not of poetry.

This is the type of poetry found most extensively in the eighteenth century: correct in technique, objective in treatment and subject, wearisome and banal in style. It is an interesting fact that whereas the eighteenth century lent to Gobineau's prose elements which give it its greatest charm, lucidity, verve, humour, the spirit of the same period, dominating his poetry, made his verse, for the greater part, unpoetical and tiresome.

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The dramatic work of Gobineau consists of two plays written in the early period of his life. They both deal with Romantic

subjects, for though in treatment the tragedy of *Alexandre* is an attempt at classic tragedy, it is, like *Les Adieux de Don Juan,* romantic in spirit. (40)

Gobineau's Don Juan is not the monster that Tirso de Molina and Molière made him to be. According to the author he is merely a man endowed with an extraordinary capacity for pleasure and, added to this, everything that made the attainment and enjoyment of pleasure possible: breeding, rank, personal charm, keeness of intellect, strong passions and wealth. (41) Gobineau points out that it would have been impossible for a bourgeois to become a Don Juan, since a bourgeois would have lacked the capacity for strong emotions. This early expression of the nature of the élite shows how little Gobineau's opinions changed in his later years. Nearly thirty years later we find him placing this fratricide in his paradise. (42)

Don Juan is the typical Romantic hero, as portrayed by Schiller in *Die Raüber* and by Byron in *Lara,* except that the Romantic antagonism between the individual and society is lacking and the villainy of the character rests entirely in his own egotism. Don Juan incarnates the desire for pleasure, and he is willing to go to any extreme to obtain it. Opposition only pushes him to further extremes of villainy. Possessing the virtue of courage and a peculiar spirit of "noblesse oblige", he is also endowed with a great self-assurance and the conviction of his final victory:

> Quand un adroit serpent fascine une colombe,
> Elle résiste un peu, mais enfin... elle tombe. (43)

The author has limited the action to one event in the life of Don Juan: his criminal love for his brother's wife, Dona Claudia.

(40) *Les Adieux de Don Juan, poème dramatique par Arthur de Gobineau,* Paris, Labitte, 1844.

Alexandre le Macédonien (written in 1843, and published posthumously in the *Nachgelassene Schriften des Grafen Gobineau,* edited by L. Schemann, Strasbourg, 1900).

(41) Léon Deffoux, "Le comte de Gobineau, *Don Juan et les Cousins d'Isis", Mercure de France,* 1924.

At the end of the play, in a five stanza poem entitled *Réflexions,* attached to the original MS., Gobineau explains his idea of the hero:

> Don Juan était un gaillard
> Qui prétendait plus que sa part.
> Il buvait sec, il suivait peu
> Les dix commandements de Dieu.
> Il n'achetait point d'indulgence...

(42) *Le Paradis de Béowulf,* chap. VI.

(43) Act I, Sc. 9.

In order to seduce her he sets fire to his father's castle during a celebration in his honour, his mother perishing in the ruins. He accidentally kills the object of his passion and finally is also the cause of his brother's death. The play shows very little originality in plot and treatment. The action is rapid and the plot comes to a logical conclusion. The stage is cleared in the fashion of true tragedy, with the exception of the hero who replies to his valet's horror at the death of Dona Claudia and Don Sancho with the words:

Ramasse mon épée. Allons courir le monde. (44)

The only distinctive element which Gobineau adds to the Don Juan legend is the typical Gobinist glorification of Energy.

Don Juan was merely a youthful attempt at the dramatic form. *Alexandre* is a more serious production. The play begins at the moment when the conqueror has returned from his victorious Asian wars and is resting and reorganizing his forces at Babylon. It tells of the rebellion of his leaders against a new campaign, their plots against him, the poisoning of her husband by Roxane (on account of jealousy of Alexander's Persian wife, Statira), and the death of the hero. The character of Alexander, like that of Cyrus, seems to have fascinated Gobineau, although in his *Histoire des Perses* he pictures him as a great traitor to the Aryan blood. In the play he appears as a man of Destiny. The psychology of the piece is the psychology of De Vigny, particularly the de Vigny of *Moïse*. From the beginning the conqueror is surrounded with an air of fatalism. Amid the distrust of his followers, he feels the solitariness of his position. His gloomy doubts are increased by the death of his friend Hephestion, struck down in a moment of anger. (45) The realization of his wife's treachery only serves to confirm his fears:

Roxane me fait voir d'une façon si rude
Dans quels vides profonds s'étend ma solitude....

Gobineau idealizes his character. He gives (in the scene of the

(44) Act. III, Sc. 9.

(45) Gobineau has treated historic facts rather freely in the play. Clitus was murdered at Samarcand and not at Babylon and Hephestion died a natural death at Ecbatana in 324 B. C. (Gobineau has him poisoned by Roxane). Alexander himself probably died of a fever (although it has been suggested that he was poisoned by Antipater). He married Statira, daughter of Cyrus of Persia, in 325 and Roxane, daughter of Oxyartes, a noble of Sogdiana in 327, but it was Roxane and not Statira who was the mother of his child. Gobineau makes the birth of Statira's child Roxane's motive of vengeance. In the rebellion of Philotas and the killing of Clitus Gobineau has followed tradition (except as to time and place).

killing of Clitus, one of the best in the play) only a glimpse of the debauchery which tradition has made the great blot on Alexander's character. He condones his insensate desire to be worshipped as a god, explaining it as the super-mind seeking to dominate weaker characters.

The character of Roxane falls far short of the classic simplicity and clearness of Greek or Racinian tragedy. The wife of the hero dallies with treachery in an ignoble way and the classic motive of revenge is spoiled by a pettishness of character and actions. Roxane is an Asiatic in her cruelty, in the fierceness of her emotions and in her willingness to seize any means to attain her end. The other personages in the play are of little importance.

The piece is neither classic in its atmosphere nor in its action. The poet has failed to give the figure of Alexander the power or the epic grandeur which he evidently wished to give. (46) His Alexander is a curious mingling of Romantic egoism and that stoic self-sufficiency which is the main trait of Gobineau's "fils de roi." He is a superman because he is an egoist. Lamenting the death of Hephestion he roughly repels the advances of Roxane (who tries to seize this occasion to bring her husband back to her). He prefers to give way to the selfishness of his own grief. Alexander and Don Juan have one thing in common, an inordinate egoism. At the heart of both plays is the conviction that the aristocrat is a man of unusual powers, of unusual possibilities, born to enjoy, as Don Juan, or to suffer, as Alexander, above the capacity of his fellow men. Thus the dramatic work of Gobineau is linked with his poetic work, with the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl* and with *Les Pléiades*.

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One of the characteristic elements of Gobineau as a writer is his dilettantism, the habit of wandering from one subject to another to satisfy the demands of his keen intelligence. His friend Countess de la Tour, who knew him better than anyone, writes of him:

(46) We are told that the play was to have been presented at the Comédie Française, but the performance was prevented by the revolution of 1848. The play was evidently not considered very highly by Gobineau himself. In a letter to his daughter (1862) he criticizes the character of Alexander as being too plaintive and he points out weaknesses in other characters. (See Schemann, introduction to 1900 ed. and Seillière, op. cit., p. 440).

Il lui eût été impossible de se cantonner dans une spécialité et il n'aimait pas à refaire ce qu'il avait déjà fait. Souvent il disait que ce que l'on apprend n'est qu'une porte que l'on ouvre sur l'immensité; plus il y a d'ouvertures, plus le regard y pénètre. (47)

Paul Bourget, in his essay on Renan, has attempted a definition of the dilettantism characteristic of that writer. It is, he says:

... beaucoup moins une doctrine qu'une disposition de l'esprit, très intelligente à la fois et très voluptueuse, qui nous incline tour à tour vers les formes diverses de la vie et nous conduit à nous prêter à toutes ces formes sans nous donner à aucune. (47a)

The dilettante, he says, dreams of having

une âme à mille facettes pour réfléchir tous les visages de l'insaisissable Isis.

Gobineau possessed this mind "à mille facettes." His thinking was dominated by a constant determination not to be drawn into the systems and doctrines of his time. He was a dilettante in his constant desire to attempt new things, to write new books, to absorb the facts of a new page of human experience. In the dilettantism of these two men, Renan and Gobineau, there are curious points of contrast. Both of them found in "intellectual joy" the keenest of satisfactions. Both of them—Renan with his Superior Man and Gobineau with his "fils de roi"—believed in an aristocracy which was, to a predominating extent, subject to the laws of the intellect. As scholars and historians they shared much in common, particulary their view of the role played by the imagination in the interpretation of history. Yet Renan's aristocracy made his dilettantism expansive, formless, deteriorating into a type of tolerance which ceased to impose judgments and make decisions. Gobineau's aristocracy, on the other hand, made his systems more rigid and his philosophy more definite. With Renan his aristocracy was the ally of his dilettantism; with Gobineau his aristocracy was its enemy. (47b)

(47) Intr. to *Amadis*, p. vi. He paints for his friend Keller (op. cit. p. 60) a verbal picture of his life at Rio de Janeiro. He shows himself running from his official dispatches back to his *Samson* ("la chose qui m'intéresse le plus"), halting between stanzas to give instructions to his secretaries. Even allowing for exaggerations of expression, this picture of his division of interests would seem to explain why Gobineau was not taken seriously either as a diplomat or as a writer.

(47a) *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*, 1889 ed.

(47b) The question of the relation between these two men and their influence on each other has been fully discussed by various writers. Schemann's assertion of the debt of Renan to Gobineau has been examined by Dreyfus (op. cit., p. 184 ff.), by Paul Souday (*Le Temps*, July 24, 1922), and by Jacques de Lacretelle ("Renan et Gobineau," *Revue de la Semaine*, July 21,

This dilettantism shows itself in most of his works. It was not that they were the impulse of the moment, a sudden flash of inspiration like the famous Essay of Rousseau. Many of them, as for example the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl,* for which he had been gathering material since his youth, are the result of years of thought. (48) But generally, having put his thoughts on paper, having made his plan, as he suggests should be done by all writers, he seems to have lost interest in the work to the extent, at any rate, of not polishing it to remove its artistic imperfections. We know that until the last few years his wife attended to most of the business of publication, correcting his proofs and corresponding with his publishers. This was made necessary, of course, by his periodic absences on diplomatic service. Nevertheless it does not seem that the final form would have been much changed if Gobineau himself had been able to follow his books in their progress through the press. (49) Having chosen the particular form in which he wanted to express his ideas (the epic poem in *Amadis;* the novel in *Les Pléiades*), he seems to forget or to ignore the necessity of keeping to the rules which the form he had

1922). M. de Boisjolin in an early article on Gobineau (*Les Peuples de la France,* p. 26) claimed that not only Renan but also Taine (in his *Histoire de la Littérature anglaise*) were influenced by the Essay. Dreyfus (p. 186) points out the fundamental differences between the Gobinist theories and those enunciated by Taine in his famous *Introduction.* He quotes M. André Chevrillon to prove that Taine knew little about Gobineau's work. The same writer points out that the *Histoire des langues sémitiques* (which is the work supposed to be influenced by Gobineau) appeared in MS. in 1847, several years before the Essay. Taine, like Renan, knew Gobineau personally, having probably met him at the house of the Princesse Mathilde (Souday, *Le Temps,* sept. 17, 1913). Renan knew and admired some of Gobineau's work, particularly the *Religions,* which he mentions in *Les Apôtres,* a work in which he makes use of Gobineau's history of Babism (chap. XIX). In the preface to the second edition of the essay, Gobineau complains that "des écrivains qui possèdent aujourd'hui une grande réputation en ont fait entrer incognito sans l'avouer les principes et même des parties entières dans leurs œuvres"; but it is impossible to discover what these "parties entières" are. This is probably one of those categorical statements which Gobineau was accustomed to make at times. That the author of the Essay did not influence the thought of Renan would be an extremely bold thing to say, but the influence was undoubtedly of a nature too general to trace to any direct borrowing or imitation.

(48) "Ne me croyez pas léger," he writes to his friend Keller, "parce que je fais beaucoup de choses. Il n'est aucune de ces choses à laquelle je n'aie pensé des années. Toutes sont nées avec moi et se développent avec une lenteur commune qui, les faisant pousser ensemble et entremêler leurs rameaux sur le même sol léger, donne un air de jardin mal soigné. Mais en réalité, elles sautent toutes des racines profondes et sont bien enfoncées dans la terre." *Ibid.,* p. 63.

(49) A comparison of the Strasbourg MS. of *Béowulf* with the Bibl. Nat. MS. shows that Gobineau made few alterations in the text. He limited himself almost entirely to changes in diction.

chosen demanded, with the result that we get in *Amadis* an unpoetical poem and in *Les Pléiades* a novel lacking in technique.

This lack of attention to form is also found in his style. The style of Gobineau is preeminently an unconscious one. In this as in many other things Gobineau was apart from his age. He lacked at the same time the glow and colour of the Romantic school and the documentary minuteness and plastic verbiage of the later schools. One of the elements which he condemned in Romanticism was an egoism showing itself in bombastic rhetoric. It would be difficult to find a writer less open to the charge of this false eloquence than Gobineau. His aristocratic disposition prevented him from displaying his emotions and his feelings on paper as his Romantic contemporaries were wont to do. Gobineau seldom posed. In the expression of his ideas he can be accused neither of insincerity nor of hyper-emotionalism. His style is extremely impersonal.

There is, however, another type of personal expression apart from the ego-centric emotionalism of Romanticism. There is a kind that is the result of the overflowing of the intellect. Probably the best example of this in French literature is Denis Diderot. With a mind super-fervid with ideas, Diderot seemed constantly under the necessity of giving expression to these ideas, of putting into speech or into writing what the mind was creating. Barbey d'Aurevilly has pointed out how much Gobineau resembled Diderot as a conversationist. (50) He resembled him more than any other writer, also, in the keen delight with which he formulated his thoughts and gave them expression. He writes to his friend Keller in 1868:

> Je n'ai jamais eu l'instinct de m'attacher à une chose en elle-même, pour la pousser à bout, et ce que je fais a plutôt pour but mon propre perfectionnement comme homme et comme être pensant. (51)

— a remark which could very well have been written by the author of *Le Neveu de Rameau*.

His style is natural and unconscious. It seldom gives the impression of seeking after rhetorical effects. Only two of his works can be said to have a conscious style and, strange to say, it is these two works—the Essay and the *Histoire des Perses*—which, from the literary point of view at any rate, have the least chance of living.

This naturalness of style also comes from a quality which was

(50) Barbey d'Aurevilly: *Les Œuvres et Les Hommes*, 2e série, "Les Historiens," vol. 10, p. 70.

(51) Op. cit., letter of Jan. 22, 1868.
pour le pousser à bout, et ce que je fais a plutôt pour but mon propre

extremely marked in the author, his skill as a *raconteur*. A. Sorel, one of Gobineau's earliest admirers in France, says of him:

> Sa conversation est certainement la plus éblouissante que j'aie connue, en facettes, en étincelles, avec un je ne sais quoi de caché, de mélancolique, de tendre qu'on devinait sous la surface; quelque chose comme les feux d'artifice dans les soirs d'été, sur le miroir des eaux de Versailles..., un tempérament délicieux d'aristocrate français. (52)

And others who knew him have also borne witness to this brilliance in conversation. It is this quality, more than any other, which adds the element of the unexpected, of the natural, to his style. Apart from the Essay, the *Histoire des Perses,* the *Cunéiformes* and the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl,* all his works were the result of his experiences and so were eminently personal, and he carried into his pages the mental gifts which shone in his conversation. (53) This explains all those passages where the language seems to glow under the power of the writer's imagination. It is not a stimulated imagination of the artist, but a kind of impassioned recollection which conjures up, in the mind, events which have taken place some time before and of which the mind still retains the charm.

It is this gift of emotional recollection, arising from the imaginative power of the raconteur, which adds colour to his style. His power as a conversationist also gives it a richness and variety. This variety includes every method at the author's disposal: formal description, narration, philosophical comment, conversation, soliloquy. Often in the midst of a lengthy, and perhaps slightly ponderous description, we come across a phrase which is epigrammatic in its completeness, or loaded with truth in its psychological acuteness. His Oriental books are full of phrases such as: "Un Asiatique comprend difficilement l'utilité de se hâter....." (54) "..... La morale de ceci est qu'en Perse tout le monde est disposé à s'occuper de ce qui ne le regarde pas, et par conséquent qu'une affaire n'est jamais désespérée." (55)

The author very often sums up a whole point of view, the trait of a whole race or a single foible of humanity in a short phrase

(52) A. Sorel: "*Le Comte de Gobineau et la ligue gobinienne en Allemagne.*" *Le Temps,* March 22, 1904.

(53) For example, the short story *Adélaïde* is the result of an anecdote told in the salon of one of his friends (Adélaïde 1913 ed., intr. by André de Hevesy).

(54) *Trois Ans en Asie,* II, 164.

(55) *Ibid.,* II, 180.

thrown in almost carelessly in the midst of ordinary description. Speaking of the marital somnolence of the Gennevilliers he adds: "Quelque chose de fort et de bruyant doit être mêlé à la vie, si l'on veut qu'elle ne devienne pas atone." (56) This habit of philosophic generalization has the effect of making the style of Gobineau an eminently thoughtful one, saved, however, from heaviness by its variety.

The element of emotionalism which we have just mentioned is, however, a minor element of a style which is for the greater part impersonal even to the extent of dryness. At times, as in the story *Le Mouchoir Rouge,* this detachment reaches that lack of feeling which is so common in the works of Gobineau's friend Mérimée. In *Les Pléiades* there are numerous examples of this almost studied attempt to avoid the description of emotion. In the following passage, for example, this indifference strikes a false note. The devout missionary Coxe receives the news of his daughter's betrothal to Wilfred. He retires to his room.

> Là, ayant fermé la porte, il se mit à genoux devant une chaise, cacha sa grosse tête dans ses mains, et ce qu'il dit à quelqu'un, il n'est pas trop aisé de le savoir, puisqu'il était tout seul; mais si ce fut une méditation pleine d'attendrissement sur le huitième verset du psaume 86.... il n'y a pas grand sujet de s'étonner. (57)

It is as if Gobineau deliberately puts himself on guard against emotionalism.

In point of style Gobineau undoubtedly belonged not to the nineteenth century but to that which preceded it, and if in the fervidness of his intellectual enthusiasm he resembled Diderot, in this detachment he resembled Voltaire more. We have noticed in his earlier novels a habit of laughing, sometimes with, sometimes at, the reader. This tendency, gradually modified by the natural hauteur of the aristocrat, became a kind of irony which appeared in his later works and which seems at times to have been greatly influenced by his undoubted misanthropy. It is perhaps the most characteristic trait of his style. It is not the irony of combat, so much as that of a man of wide experience who looks at the world above the clouds of prejudice, sometimes with a smile on his face at the foibles of humanity. It often expresses itself in a scene in which the comic element plays an important part. In *M^lle^ Irnois*

(56) *Les Pléiades,* II, ix, p. 179.
(57) *Ibid.,* p. 175.

the wretched waif appears in the salon of a philosophic bluestocking:

> Par bonheur cette dame avait ce jour-là autour d'elle plusieurs personnes invitées à dîner et parmi ses convives, M. Diderot, M. Rousseau, de Genève, et M. Grimm. Le récit du vagabond déguenillé servit de texte heureux à différentes considérations trop justes, hélas! sur l'ordre social. M. Rousseau, de Genève, embrassa publiquement Irnois; M. Diderot l'appela aussi son frère. Mais il ne l'embrassa pas ; quant à M. Grimm, qui était baron, il se contenta de lui faire de la main un geste sympathique en l'assurant qu'il voyait en lui *l'homme*, le chef-d'œuvre de la Nature.

Then, adds the author, "par les plus étonnants des hasards," they remembered, in sending him away, to order that he be given some soup and a bed, but by the next day he had been completely forgotten and would have been turned out if the butler had not found his broad shoulders useful. (58)

In this description of loose, easy emotions there is a cleverness of phrasing and a subtle humour which takes the edge off the satire. There are other scenes in these earlier works (59), in which the satire is of this humourous kind, scenes that lead the reader to concur in the judgment of Mérimée that his friend possessed "la bosse de l'observation comique." (60) In his later works, when the poison of pessimism was working in his veins, this irony took a more bitter form. There is something of the virulence of the priest-hating of Voltaire in the following description of missionary effort:

> D'ailleurs les distributions (de la Bible) se font avec une extrême facilité; les peuples de l'Asie, un peu rétifs à l'abord et n'acceptant le précieux volume que du bout des doigts, savent maintenant fort bien le solliciter ; ils en font les commandes les plus considérables. Les Chinois s'en servent en guise de tuiles pour les maisons; les Persans, plus littéraires, appliquent les reliures à l'habillement de leurs propres livres. Ce n'est de quoi décourager personne. La Grâce peut gîter dans le feuillet que le vent fait tournoyer par les champs et plaque à la fin sur une eau stagnante; de là il lui est facile, si elle le juge à propos, de sauter aux yeux du premier couly venu pour remplir son seau. Dans cette espérance fort naturelle, nos populations anglaises donnent leur argent, les agents vivent à l'aise et notre corps consulaire recrute dans leurs rangs des représentants du Royaume-Uni qui, généralement, n'ont aucune des qualités de M. Coxe. (61)

In some form or other, sometimes in a few words inserted in

(58) *Mademoiselle Irnois*, 1924 ed. (pub. with *Adélaïde*), p. 64.

(59) As for example the scene in *Le Prisonnier Chanceux* in which the father of Jean de la Tour-Miracle is discussing with the local priest the peccadilloes of his son (1925 ed., p. 14 ff).

(60) Paul Souday: *Le Temps*, Feb. 8, 1923.

(61) *Les Pléiades*, Book I, chap. 4.

a description or narration, sometimes through a whole page of description (as in his description of Gennevillers in *Les Pléiades*), (62) this irony appears in all Gobineau's works.

His language is for the most part precise, correct, sober. He seldom indulges in that type of documentation by means of vocabulary which he condemns in Gautier. His Oriental works contain a number of Oriental words. We are introduced to pishkedmet, Ket-Khoda, felekèh, tjargat and others. He uses the Oriental word, however, more sparingly than Kipling. It appears chiefly in description and is very frequently accompanied by a translation. In the Oriental works his local colour comes not so much from a reproduction of vocabulary as from a phrase translated to give the Oriental sense of an hyperbole or metaphor. (63) This method is in complete accord with the other elements of his style. It substitutes for the impressionism of exotic vocabularies the soberness of careful analysis or exposition. Its chief aim is clearness. A recent writer has compared the descriptive language of Gobineau, as exemplified in *Trois Ans en Asie,* with Loti's style in *Vers Ispahan* (a book of travel covering the same territory.) (64) The comparison is an illuminating one. Beside the concentrated, suggestive, colourful, emotional language of Loti, the language of Gobineau shows itself precise, measured, careful, deliberate even to the extent of being at times ponderous. It is the language of the mind, while Loti's is that of the emotions.

Gobineau seems to have taken a special delight in placing before

(62) Of Gennevillers Gobineau says: Il était libéral et attachait une importance extrême comme tous les gens sages à pouvoir dire à chaque contradicteur avec un sourire attirant: "Nous sommes moins loin l'un de l'autre que vous ne semblez le croire" (Book II, chap. vi).

(63) As for example the description of a formal visit in *Trois Ans en Asie:* « Quand chacun est casé, vous vous tournez d'une manière assez aimable vers votre hôte et vous lui demandez si, grâce à Dieu, *son nez est gras.* Il vous répond: *Gloire à Dieu,* il l'est, *par l'effet de votre bonté !* — Gloire à Dieu ! répliquez-vous » (II, 196).

(64) Jean Bloch, "Les Itinéraires parallèles de Gobineau et de Loti en Perse", *Europe,* Oct. 1, 1923. We cite a single example:

Gobineau. — Bouschyr ne représente réellement qu'un hommage rendu par la Perse à la necessité d'avoir un port sur son golfe. Les maisons sont pour la plupart misérables; on rencontre à chaque pas des huttes, des cabanes de bois de palmier qui n'appartiennent à aucun ordre d'architecture; il y a des places entières encombrées de ruines qui, lorsqu'elles n'étaient pas ruinées, ne valaient guère mieux (*Trois Ans,* p. 131).

Loti. — Bender Bouchir—ville de tristesse et de mort s'il en fut, groupe de masures croulantes sous un ciel maudit... (*Vers Ispahan,* p. 6).

his reader an accurate description of his characters. He pauses in the midst of a narrative to paint in a few lines a careful portrait of the new character. Sometimes this character is only of minor importance in the story. With what evident pleasure he describes the proprietress of the Grand Hôtel de Colchide at Poti before whose charms, "dépassant peut-être, dans l'envergure entière de sa personne, une mesure modeste de moyens de plaire", the whole army of the Caucasus was prostrated! (65) Generally it is one of the chief characters of the story which the author puts before us clearly and fully. His methods are taken from La Bruyère and the other great masters of the literary form. First of all the physical description, clear, precise, vivid, with now and then a classic simile to drive home the force of the physical details. M. Irnois is portrayed as: "Mal bâti, grand, maigre, sec, jaune, pourvu d'une énorme bouche mal meublée et dont la mâchoire massive serait une arme terrible dans une main comme celle de l'Hercule hébreu." (66) Then, after the physical description, the moral effect, its relation to the physical:

> ... il n'avait dans sa personne rien qui par la séduction fût de nature à faire oublier les défectuosités de son caractère et celles de son intelligence.

Gobineau's method in the portrait, as elsewhere, is objective. There is very little attempt to portray by suggestion. If Gobineau uses a symbol, it is generally in the form of a simile, to make the description clearer, and not to suppress words. He was never afraid of offending by being explicit. On the contrary, his descriptions tend sometimes to become rather diffusive in their piling up of nouns or adjectives, as for example in the following description of princess Pamina:

> Elle était grande, mince, svelte, faite à ravir, délicate, souple ; les plus beaux cheveux du monde et des yeux bleus d'une douceur et d'une profondeur infinies, avec cela étonnés et charmants; un sourire divin éclairait son joli visage. Un air de prendre intérêt à tout ce qu'elle faisait, dans tout ce qu'elle disait, et un caractère mélangé d'esprit pétillant, de raison, de sensibilité, d'entraînement, et de retenue en faisaient l'être le plus séduisant de tous les êtres. (67)

In such a description each word, each adjective, is used to add another shade of meaning to a character which the author intends to be complex, and, at the same time, to give more or less a unified

(65) *Nouvelles Asiatiques*, pp. 14-15.
(66) Op. cit., p. 6.
(67) *Les Pléiades*, Book III, chap. 6.

impression to the reader. So his description of Pamina gives the impression of womanhood at its highest and noblest development, just as his description, in the same book, of Liliane, (68) is meant to give tne idea of youthful grace.

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In his poetry Gobineau, the literary artist, was at his worst. The work of his early years shows that he was interested in the art of making verse and he seems to have made an attempt to master the rules of prosody. Later on, when his imagination was stirred by the masterpieces of Dante, Camoens and others, he aspired to use poetry to express his ideas. The character of those ideas, his liking for large subjects, forced him more or less into the epic form. So he wrote *Le Paradis de Béowulf* and *Amadis*. The result was two works in which poetic inspiration shows itself only at rare intervals between long passages of tiresome verse.

The chief fault of his poetry is that it is purely objective. It deals with ideas, not with feelings It is exposition or narration, not poetry. It shows a complete disregard for the elements of selection and concentration. This absence of most of the qualities which are peculiar to the poetic form make it little different from his prose. This inability to condense, which makes his poetry tiresome and banal, is also present in his other work. Here it shows itself in a careful accumulation of words for the purpose of conveying definite shades of thought. It makes his prose diffuse at times but, on the whole, it helps to make it clear.

The chief elements of Gobineau's prose style are variety, naturalness, clearness and a kind of detachment which often appears in the form of irony. It is preeminently the style of the thinker rather than of the artist.

(68) *Ibid.*, Book I, chap. 2.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The work of Count de Gobineau, as we have seen, falls into two periods. Born into a legitimist family, he inherited those aristocratic ideas which formed the basis of his philosophy. His life in Paris came at the time of young manhood, when the mind is most receptive to new ideas. This period shows him in the midst of the intellectual life of his time, condemning with his generation the literary period which was passing, even while retaining some vestiges of its character. The artist in him was stimulated by attempts at expression in poetry and drama and his scholarly instincts were aroused by contact with scholars, chiefly Orientalists.

Then came his entry into diplomacy, resulting in a break with his life as a professional writer, and arresting those talents for literary criticism of which he showed definite signs. Henceforth Gobineau was to suffer from a duality of interests, the one dictated by the exigencies of his profession, the other by the keenness and verve of his extremely active intelligence. He chose to play the double rôle of diplomat and scholar and, in so doing, he was looked upon as an amateur in both.

Very early in his diplomatic career he published the Essay, which was poorly received. It is probable that the failure of this work was the beginning of that misanthropy which, year by year, ate deeper into the soul of the author. Had the Essay been merely the work of a scholar with no prejudices outside the theories propounded in the book, it might have been followed by works in which the harsh outlines of his doctrines were softened by a broader

and more sympathetic philosophy. Unfortunately, however, the training and temperament of the author, his fundamental aristocracy, assisted in confirming and fixing his ideas of decadence. His aristocratic hauteur brought him into difficulties with his associates, who had little sympathy for this *Alceste du patriotisme,* as they called him. At the same time the rejection of his theories by that class of men whom he valued most highly, namely the scholars, caused him bitter disappointment. Furthermore, the conditions in the France of his day strengthened this conviction of decadence. All these elements assisted in developing in him pessimism and misanthropy. He tried to discover the true élite in the race, in the family and in the individual and, finally, brought face to face with sheer pessimism, he sought refuge in a noble stoicism which preached a difficult individualism subject to the rules of energy, intelligence and beauty.

To offset this gloomy point of view Gobineau had all the pleasures of the intellectual life. His keen interest in the processes and results of human thought and observation gave him something akin to the "joie intellectuelle" extolled by his great contemporary Renan. He was continually absorbed by the pleasure of noting the phenomena of his own and other times, and of many places. He painstakingly records these phenomena, not for the love of his fellow men, but for the satisfaction of his own intellect.

Interested as he was in many phases of human thought and action, he was however far from being the ideal dilettante. The rigidity of his doctrines prevented him from lapsing into a kind of spineless dilettantism which was the mark of Renan's last years. Quite different was it, too, from that of Anatole France, the other great dilettante of the nineteenth century. With Anatole France intellectual joy led to hedonism. Gobineau's was a sterner discipline. For him the chief end of life lay in the duty of the "honnête homme" to work out his own spiritual salvation (1). Both Gobineau and Anatole France believed in the importance of the ego, but while the latter advocated the indulgence of the self in all pleasures, Gobineau believed in repression, with a view to the development of the ideal gentleman.

To increase and heighten his joy in the intellectual life, came the opportunities which his diplomatic labours afforded of seeing new peoples and observing new customs. Gradually his role as a literary

(1) See *Les Pléiades,* III., 4, p. 266, quoted above, chap. III.

man evolved. Gradually his talents as a writer began to assert themselves as he published works on history and travel. The artist in him, which had shown itself in his early days in a number of fictional works written hastily for journals, now appeared in short stories and in a novel, in which he gave proof of his mature talents. The Essay, in a way, built up a wall between the high-spirited, witty, almost jovial tone of his first novels and his future work. This wall was never completely broken down, for the quality of his irony remained bitter. Nevertheless the richness and variety of his experiences reacted against his pessimism in such a way as to develop in him the rôle of the sympathetic observer. Gloomy as was his philosophy of man in general, awkward and halting as were his relations with men who did not belong to his own *famille d'esprits,* he never failed to show an intense interest in the individual as a human phenomenon. Like the aristocratic Baron Grimm of his *M*[lle] *Irnois,* he was unwilling to embrace his fellow beings with Rousseauistic warmheartedness, but he did not fail to see in him "l'homme, le chef-d'œuvre de la Nature." Paradoxical as it may seem, his objective interest in the human individual is in direct proportion to his pessimism concerning the race as a whole. From this intense interest come the most brilliant pages of his travel books.

Probably no other branch of literature suffers so much from the blight of mediocrity as the literature of travel. The reason for this is that the traveller generally rests on the surface of things, and sees effects rather than causes. When the traveller has the gift of getting below the surface to the processes of the mind of a people, which alone can explain social facts, then the travel book becomes a scientific document of importance. It is this ability to understand the mental life of a people which characterizes the Oriental works of Gobineau. In these works the creator of grandiose theories concerning the race gives way to the observer of little facts and details. The synthesis of these facts has given us the brilliant chapters of *Religions et Philosophies;* the application of them to fiction has given life and interest to the stories in the *Nouvelles Asiatiques.* Here, again, the basis of Gobineau's art is his ability to observe and note social phenomena.

Gobineau, the writer of travel books, is related to Gobineau, the historian, through his habit of associating history with geography. In his works there is an almost total absence of that feeling of intimate relationship with Nature found in Romantic literature, but,

if the heart does not respond to the appeal of the landscape, his mind, in a very definite way, seeks to establish relationships. He ignores the physical aspect of the countryside and sees it only as the depository of its legendary or historical traditions. In this way, by a kind of mystic imagination, he links geography with history.

Gobineau, says Robert Dreyfus, is "essentiellement un précurseur." This is nowhere more true than in his Oriental work. The most striking fact about these books on the East is the modernity of their spirit. There are many signs to-day that the West is getting tired of the sensuous, over-coloured, impressionistic Orient of Loti and his school. It is demanding more solid nourishment. The Great War has made us realize the necessity of a deeper understanding between East and West. Evidence of this fact is rapidly accumulating. The popularity of such works as Count Hermann Keyserling's *Reisetagebuch eines Philosophen,* one of the most thoughtful travel books of modern times (2), shows that the people of the West are being attracted to the mind of the East and not merely to its picturesqueness. Schools have been founded by Tagore in Calcutta and by Keyserling in Germany, the aim of which is to prepare the way for an inter-racial, world-wide culture. In France such works as *Les Appels de l'Orient* (3) are devoting themselves to a discussion of this problem by the keenest minds of Europe and America. In France a group of European thinkers recently spent two weeks in an isolated place with Oriental scholars, pondering over these same questions. From Alexandria, for centuries a meeting place of East and West, comes the announcement of a series of works by Westernized Orientals, the object of which is the interpretation of Oriental culture to Europeans. The aim of all this activity is to find a common ground between the thought of the Occident and the Orient.

This is the spirit which dominates Gobineau's books on the East. This is the point of view of *Trois ans en Asie,* of *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale,* and even the *Nouvelles Asiatiques* repeat the same ideas. In this respect Gobineau is in direct relation with the tendency of modern thought. In his intelligent attempt to bridge the cultural gulf between East and West he goes beyond the nineteenth and anticipates the twentieth century.

As a social philosopher, however, he belongs definitely to his

(2) *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher* (Eng. ed., Harcourt Brace and Co., New-York, 1925) passed through four editions in six months.

(3) *Les Appels de l'Orient,* in the "Cahiers du Mois", Paris, sept. 1925.

own time. The dominant social philosophy of the eighteenth century was contained in the idea of Progress. The *philosophes* looked upon mankind as capable of advancing continuously towards perfection in the social organism. Education, the discoveries of science and their adoption, justice in the administration of the laws, and enlightenment in every phase of human activity were to produce the ideal state. These ideas have been carried into modern times by Wells, Bertrand Russell and the scientific materialists, but they have met with strong opposition. Gobineau sees mankind headed in the other direction. Seventy years before Spengler, Madison Grant and the pessimistic school, his works told the history of the degeneracy of society. Like the modern German philosopher Keyserling, he saw culture everywhere moribund, attributing it not to the evolution of the machine-made state, as does the German, but to the total decadence of race stock. He saw in society an inevitable dualism, not the Marxian dualism of owners and non-owners (property did not concern him), but the dualism of the aristocrat and the rest. The complete degeneracy of society was to come when the one class, always diminishing, died out. This was the slow but inevitable end towards which society was drifting. There seems to be no place in his system for anything which will avert this catastrophe. In *la Fleur d'or* he flirts with the theory that civilization is the history of a series of cultural growths and declines, but his remarks seem to have been made to explain his interest in history and to cover certain weaknesses in his general theory.

The past appeared vivid to him because it was an inseparable part in the drama the last act of which was decadence. He always interpreted it in terms of the individual man. His Viking sympathies made him see everywhere in history the system of the Northmen, where the leader was the true moulder of society. It is this conception which arouses the artist in him when he attempts to describe the Renaissance, with its tremendous vitality and its vast possibilities for good or evil. It is this insistence on the individual which causes him to see in the history of Persia the sum of personalities like Cyrus, Alexander and their compeers. This theory which sees the individual as the interpreter of the race gives to his historical works their peculiar literary quality.

Gobineau's works belong to the literature of ideas rather than that of form. A recent writer, in discussing Stendhal and Flaubert, has made the distinction between the "écrivain artiste" and

the "écrivain homme." To this latter class Gobineau undoubtedly belongs. In his short stories he has most clearly kept within the artistic limitations of the genre, but even in these he has allowed his role as an expounder and interpreter to influence the artistic unity of the work. He is preeminently an ideologist. Despite his talents as an artist and his belief in beauty as a necessary element in the life of the élite, he does not hesitate to sacrifice form to thought.

Like most ideologists he is dispassionate and objective in his writings. Emotion and sympathy are displaced by irony, particularly in his fictional work. It is possible to be a great novelist without sympathy, as Flaubert, Mérimée, Zola and others have shown, providing one has seriousness and the power of intelligent observation. These gifts Gobineau undoubtedly possessed. They are the basis of his skill in portraiture. With a few exceptions, such as M^lle^ Irnois and the men and women in *Adélaïde,* his characters seldom appear as individuals. They are rather individualized types, reflections of his ideals concerning race phenomena. They seem real because the author has injected into them the elements of energy and wit. These two elements preserve them from being mere puppets for the conveyance of the writer's ideas.

It is significant that the most popular of his works, the one most widely read, is *La Renaissance.* It is undoubtedly the work most typical of the author, in subject and treatment. Here he has combined, in a brilliant way, his gifts as a writer and as an historian. Gobineau is nearest the artist when he is under the spell of historical facts and events.

As a writer Gobineau defies classification. The essence of his work is an intelligent humanism, based upon a wide knowledge of the literature of his own country and of other lands. The small library preserved in the Gobineau room in the university of Strasbourg furnishes eloquent testimony of the catholicity of his tastes. Here we find the classics of most of the countries of Europe: Shakespeare, Dante, Lope de Vega, Cervantes, Camoens, Scott, Byron, Thackeray, Longfellow, Goethe, Hoffmann, Northern sagas, Chinese novels, Persian poetry, as well as the works of his French contemporaries He had the power of getting from them the vital spirit which made them great. This is particularly true of the classics of his own country. At the heart of Gobineau's writings is a kind of literary eclecticism which enabled him to discover the touch of genius in a work and make it peculiarly his own.

It is this close connection with the literature of his country that definitely classifies Gobineau as a writer. Despite his admiration for German institutions, there is little in his artistic equipment for which we have to seek the source in Germany. He had that *weltgeist* of which the Teuton prides himself, but the rest of his character is essentially Gallic. It is Gallic in that happy combination of fact and imaginative generalization which is at the heart of his syntheses. It is Gallic in the predominance of *bon sens,* which holds down his exalted imagination to the level of impartiality. Above all it is Gallic in its preoccupation with the element which, above all, characterizes the literature of his country, the element of clarity.

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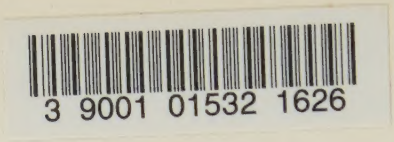
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